(Extremely) Unconventional Therapy

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/29616570.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Categories:	M/M, F/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham/Will Graham, Will Graham/Beverly Katz
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Miriam Lass, Abel Gideon, Jack Crawford, Will Graham's Dogs, Beverly Katz, Abigail Hobbs, Mischa Lecter, Will Graham's Father
Additional Tags:	Dark Will Graham, Alternate Universe - Time Travel, Dimension Travel, Will Graham Kills Hannibal Lecter, Angst, Infidelity, Post-Fall (Hannibal), Eventual Happy Ending, Eventual Romance, Will Graham Helps Himself, Selfcest, Child Hannibal, Parent Will Graham, Will Finds Himself a New Hannibal, Crack Treated Seriously, Sassy Will Graham, Angst and Fluff and Smut, endgame hannigram, Moral Ambiguity, Gray Will Graham, Gray Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal Lecter: Vegetarian, Existential Camping Trip
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Unconventional Therapy
Stats:	Published: 2021-02-21 Completed: 2021-06-30 Words: 64,322 Chapters: 27/27

(Extremely) Unconventional Therapy

by LadyFelixTristis

Summary

Will responds very, very poorly to Hannibal's latest test.

Unfortunately for the multiverse, his new ability to dimension-hop coincides with his homicidal reaction.

All is not lost, though. Will eventually stumbles upon unexpected opportunities for happiness.

Notes

This fic was inspired by the blurb from the book Infinite by Brian Freeman. I have not read the book, but the premise was too much fun to not play with.

I Had a Gift for You

A woman, dark haired and bright eyed, was hastily exiting the house he and Hannibal shared as he pulled into the driveway. Will watched her suspiciously as she climbed into a small sedan and left the property without acknowledging his presence at all.

It wasn't until he found Hannibal in the shower and their bed stinking of sex that the pit formed in his stomach. It was then that inside his heart, embers of betrayal quietly ignited what would eventually become a burning rage.

But he knew Hannibal. This was all intentional. He was trying to anger Will for some reason. He knew that Will considered infidelity the sole unforgivable transgression against their relationship. He could deal with gaslighting. He could deal with near-fatal injury. He could even deal with being abandoned to a group of curious opera patrons to awkwardly make conversation while Hannibal fucked off to acquire some more wine and whiskey.

He could not deal with infidelity. He could not forgive it. Hannibal knew this.

The only response Will could make that would give the other man no satisfaction was to pretend nothing had happened as he planned his revenge.

He stroked the face of his new watch.

—

A few hours earlier…

His burner phone vibrated as he watched the ducks swim in a lake, relaxed on a park bench. Checking the caller, he smiled. "Stefan," he greeted. "News?"

"Mr. Morel," Stefan said. "Excellent news. It's ready."

"You've tested it?"

"No, no, of course not. You know there is no way to return. But the calculations are all correct. The power source is miniaturized. If this doesn't work, nothing will. Nothing that we can create."

"Okay," Will agreed easily. "When can I pick it up?"

"It's ready now. Come whenever you like."

"See you in fifteen."

—

Will was a patient man. He could wait.

He did wait.

He lived life as normal with his husband. They hunted, cooked, ate, talked, and fucked as normal.

But neither of them was really there, anymore. Will waited for Hannibal to redeem or doom himself. Hannibal waited for Will to acknowledge the strain and tension growing between them. The uncomfortable reality of a relationship beginning to crumble.

It had been a long time coming. They loved each other with passion and violence, and they understood one another far better than most couples. But years of cohabitation had led to resentment and regret, a sense of being without options. Familiarity had bred contempt.

Their downfall would be their mutual possessiveness. Despite the peeling edges of their relationship, despite the low current of resentment running through Will's veins *(resentment born after their cliff fall, when he blamed Hannibal for their life on the run)*. Despite it all, Hannibal belonged to Will. Will belonged to Hannibal.

And yet.

The girl. Woman. She couldn't have been older than thirty.

She found Will home alone one day. Hannibal had left to retrieve a few last-minute things he needed for dinner, he had claimed. Unlike him. Will had been suspicious.

He saw her coming. He watched her reflection in the smooth glass of his tablet screen, his back to the sliding door she eased open after unlocking it with a key hidden beneath the mat. There wasn't usually a key there.

The classical music on the audio system, music Hannibal had queued up before leaving, concealed the soft *fwoosh* of the door in its track.

Will would have noticed the difference in air even if he hadn't seen her reflection. The slight breeze. The pleasant odor of the lilies that grew just outside.

He watched her toe off her flats, leaving her in socked feet. Good girl.

He watched her slowly, silently approach him from behind. He could smell the expensive perfume he'd seen a bottle of in Hannibal's shopping bag a few weeks previous. Sloppy. Wearing a fragrance on a kill mission was very sloppy.

The knife she drew from a sheath on her belt made no sound. She drew it with confidence. Practiced. Accomplished.

But she was still young.

She was surprised when, reaching forward intent on quickly cutting Will's throat, she found her arm seized and sharp teeth sinking into her wrist and tearing off flesh and veins. He spat out the flesh and blood immediately, not fond of raw meat.

She screamed, dropping the knife from the sudden pain. Will nudged it underneath the sofa. They wouldn't be needing it right then. He pulled her over the back of the furniture by her wounded arm, catching her against his still-solid chest, a mock embrace.

"Oh darlin', what'd he tell you?" Will crooned.

Her terror-filled eyes watched him, frozen in fear. Freezing in the face of danger was a very undesirable trait in an apprentice. Did Hannibal know about this obvious weakness?

She didn't answer him.

"Doesn't matter, I suppose," he said. He applied pressure to her wrist to staunch the bleeding. "Listen, sweetheart. I don't know what he told you about me, about us, so I've already forgiven you your trespasses. I haven't forgiven him, though, and that's something I need to work out with him alone. So I'm going to fix you up enough for you to get yourself to a hospital, and you're going to go. Understand? You won't return."

She nodded, hesitantly.

"Good."

He helped her to her feet and led her to the downstairs powder room. There, he carefully tended to her wound, applying hemostat before covering it with gauze and wrapping it with a bandage. She would be fine until she got some professional treatment.

"Why are you doing this?" she asked with a pleasantly husky voice, less fearful than she had been, though her eyes kept straying to his mouth, still stained with her blood.

"The man has a silver tongue," he said. "I fell for it too. Maybe you'll turn out better than I did."

—

"It was a test." Will made no effort to hide the disdain in his voice.

"Yes." Hannibal's person suit was completely buttoned-up, his emotions suppressed. Will hated it when he did that while they were at home together, and Hannibal knew it.

"After all these years, you are still testing me. To what? See if I've still got it? Or are you just bored?"

"To some extent, both." The way he leaned casually against the kitchen counter as if everything was fine was infuriating.

"Why are we still here then? Why are we still trying?" He did not attempt to conceal the snarl his lips twisted themselves into. Hannibal knew he was angry.

"You know why," Hannibal said with a *look*. "And you passed my test."

"You're still bored. You'll test me again." Will felt exhaustion creeping up on him. Emotional exhaustion. His body felt wired.

"Likely. Yes."

That was when Will's patience snapped. When all of his resentment, contempt, and buried hatred for this man exploded into flame. The burning love that he felt for the other only added to the inferno. He wondered if Hannibal could see the fire in his eyes. How dangerous it was for him.

Outwardly, Will sighed with disappointment. He walked the few feet to Hannibal, grabbed his jaw, and angled his face to kiss him, deep and filthy. He inhaled Hannibal's exhaled breath, buried his tongue in Hannibal's hot mouth, made a small, pained noise as he remembered their time together.

Hannibal moaned. Hannibal trusted him.

Hannibal didn't notice the knife, retrieved earlier from beneath the sofa, until it pierced his abdomen and was yanked across. Deeper than their kiss. Deeper than the linoleum knife had pierced so many years ago.

Hannibal's moan changed in character, a kind of pleased agony, as he clutched at Will's arms and shoulders.

Will guided him to the floor and held the bleeding man in his lap, kissing him and stroking his face. His fingers left streaks of blood in their wake. He spoke quietly, mournfully, to the man he had sacrificed everything for. The man who had guided a transformation that needn't have ever taken place.

"I had a gift for you, you know. Time and teacups, as you like to say. A clever scientist in the city was happy to devote his team to a special project once I showed him the amount of funding I could offer. I thought we could find your sister. Make a new life where we could raise her. Where we weren't wanted men. But I came home to sheets wet with a woman's cunt, and I started thinking that I would have been better off never meeting you. I told you, Hannibal, that it was the one thing I could never forgive. I think I'll always love you and hate you in equal measure."

The heartbreak in Hannibal's eyes was precisely what Will had hoped to achieve. It wasn't satisfying, though. Not like he'd wanted.

He kissed the broken man's lips one last time. "I hope for both our sakes that there's no such thing as hell," he whispered. He held and comforted his love until the end. Hannibal never tried to retaliate. They both knew that at least one of them would die by the other's hands, someday.

Once Hannibal had breathed his last, Will laid him gently on the floor. Closed his blankly staring eyes. His body was diminished in death, his self-assured posture completely lax. The man he had loved and hated was gone, nothing but a shell left behind.

He showered while Hannibal's body cooled, his lover’s blood mixing with water and flowing down the drain.

He dressed as the body’s decay began, choosing the practical tactical-style clothing he preferred wearing on hunts. His oilskin duster went on top, and sturdy leather boots hugged his feet. His favorite pistol in its pocket holster was tucked into his pants.

He took his pack from the guest room closet and made sure it contained what he would need. Some survival supplies, a lot of socks, cold-weather gear, his favorite knives, his revolver, ammo for both guns, and a few other odds and ends. He wasn’t too worried about what would happen to him. He would join his Hannibal in death before too long. If the button worked, it would be a little while yet before he did so. If the button proved ineffective, he would be joining him tonight.

He returned to the body one last time. From his watch, he slid free a card-shaped metal piece and dipped it in Hannibal's blood, then re-inserted it in the watch. He used a dropper to fill a vial with more, just in case.

As his last act in this world, he brushed the hair away from Hannibal’s face, softly caressing those devastating cheekbones and gently smoothing his near-invisible eyebrows. “This world is better off without us, babe,” he said to the corpse.

He made no effort to conceal his guilt. They would search for him, but they would never find him. Or if the button didn’t work, they would find him, right next to Hannibal. His right hand brushed over his left wrist, gently rubbing the face of the watch resting there. It was nothing special looking. No need to tempt anyone into stealing it.

On the side of the watch, he pressed a red button.

I Shatter Over and Over Again

The journey was not what he had expected.

He thought it might be hot, or windy, or like he was a wizard being squeezed through an apparition straw.

It wasn't any of those. It was oppressively cold and still, and the integrity of his body felt at risk, like the journey would tear him apart despite the stillness. He felt too big. He felt like there was too much space between his atoms. He thought he might be growing larger and larger the longer he stayed in the dark void, and he imagined each tiny speck of his body becoming a planet or a star in a new universe that he had not intended to create.

It was working. It might be working. *Something* was happening.

He imagined himself punching through to the next layer of a dimensional onion. Slipping through a hole in a sheet of notebook paper from a pencil pressed too firmly, to land on the page behind. Not far to travel. A small trip. Just one sheet over. Practically nothing.

Would the relative proximity of the dimensions reflect the relative similarity of what had taken place in each? Might he end up in a world where dinosaurs never went extinct? Where the air was toxic to human lungs? His stint as a dimension traveler might turn out to be very brief, indeed, if the place he landed was not compatible with human survival.

The blood he'd taken was meant to ensure that he would always find himself in the vicinity of a version of Hannibal. That would be the blood that he had inserted into an *extremely experimental prototype* he could only hope would function *perfectly* on the first try. So it was anyone's guess, really, whether or not it would work. And if it did, whether or not it would work consistently.

His best case scenario was that the dimensions he slipped into would be similar enough to his own to give him a knowledge advantage.

In a moment and an eternity, he found that the trip was over.

He appeared across from a vaguely familiar hotel, incongruous sun shining in a blue sky dotted with fluffy clouds, birds cheerfully singing. The warm air and sunlight tried to seep into his skin and warm his bones as he stood in place, but the frozen sensation would not be shaken that easily. He tried to get his shivering under control before he was seen.

A rental car turned into the largely-empty parking lot, easily locating a space. The door smoothly opened and Hannibal exited, spotting him immediately.

It had worked.

"Will," he said. "I didn't expect you to leave so early." His smile was a trap.

“Early bird gets the worm,” Will said nonsensically. He had just left an older Hannibal dead on their kitchen floor. Seeing this younger, living version was both strange and infuriating. “Let’s get going.” *Let’s get far away from my other self.*

“If you wish,” Hannibal agreed. “I did bring breakfast.” Will wanted to wipe the secretive, smug look off of his face. God, he hated the man. Hated what the man might go on to do to his other self, if left unchecked.

“Did you? What did you bring?”

“A simple protein scramble. Some eggs, some sausage.” Cassie Boyle sausage, he supposed.

Will was, admittedly, hungry. He had killed his Hannibal before they had a chance to make dinner.

“Let’s stop by a park to have breakfast after our visit to the first construction site. That work for you?”

“Of course,” he agreed graciously.

Will let Hannibal drive, directing him towards what should have been the third construction site they checked. He needed this world’s Will to be far away from them, and he needed Hannibal’s eyes on the road. He didn’t look obscenely older than this world’s Will should, but he was different enough to be noticeable with close inspection. Hopefully, any changes Hannibal had noticed so far had left him thinking his memory a tad faulty. What was the alternative? That an older version of Will Graham had turned up?

That would be *ridiculous.*

“I would apologize for my analytical ambush, but I know I will soon be apologizing again and you’ll tire of that eventually. I have to consider using apologies sparingly.”

Spare me, Will thought. “Just try to keep your analytical thoughts to yourself,” he said. “Stay focused on the job we’re here to do.”

“Or we could socialize like adults. God forbid we become friendly.” Will had always suspected that Hannibal’s conversation with him that morning all those years ago, *this* morning, had been planned. He had probably rehearsed these “Ingratiate myself with Will Graham” conversation points in his memory palace.

“The shrike didn’t kill the girl in the field,” he said, moving the conversation along, bored. After all, that’s where this conversation was supposed to go.

“The devil is in the details. What didn’t your Copy Cat do to the girl in the field? What gave it away?” *So predictable.*

“Elise Nichols being tucked into bed was a mournful apology from a man who believes he loves and honors the girls he kidnaps and kills. The girl in the field was an art installation by a narcissist who thought her less than human. They’re not remotely similar. The fact Jack Crawford couldn’t recognize the difference shows what a pathetic profiler he is.”

Hannibal was visibly surprised, but would not be diverted from his chosen conversational path. “You know, I think Uncle Jack sees you as a fragile little tea-cup, the finest china used only for special guests.”

Will smirked. “Dr. Lecter, I *am* a fragile teacup. I shatter over and over again, and I piece myself back together *every time*.”

—

In the dim trailer office, Will pulled on a pair of black nitrile gloves.

The construction site was deserted, save for the secretary.

The two of them shuffled through boxes of papers for a while, the dull sort of work that Will hadn’t missed during his years on the run with his Hannibal. This was not the site that held the Hobbs document, so there was nothing interesting to find.

Still, he pulled a few files and laid them out. Hannibal looked over curiously. “Did you find something peculiar?”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Will said. “Best to keep looking.”

Hannibal dropped the topic and returned to examining his own box of files.

Hannibal didn’t immediately notice when Will drew his gun from his pocket holster. By the time he saw the movement from the corner of his eye, the gun had been aimed and fired, and a bullet was tearing into his chest. He had a very limited period of time to realize what had occurred.

The secretary began to scream in terror. He shot her in the head without hesitation, silencing her. Leaving a witness to point their finger at this world’s Will Graham would be foolish.

When was the last time he’d cared about killing innocent people? He wondered. If Hannibal had done anything useful for him, it had been helping him become desensitized to the emotions of people he was not actively trying to empathize with.

Of course, it was likely the desensitization that had allowed Will to kill his Hannibal.

The look on this Hannibal’s face as he took his last, choked breaths was *fascination.*

Will rolled his eyes at the look as he borrowed the deceased man’s handkerchief and used it to begin wiping down the surfaces he had touched before donning his gloves. A few minutes later, he did the same in the vehicle. He used a small flashlight to examine the passenger seat, door, and floor for any hairs he might have left behind. Clothing fibers wouldn’t matter. This world’s Will had a very different wardrobe.

He grabbed the breakfast bag from the back seat before returning to the office. He really was quite hungry.

Inside, he dialed 9-1-1 on the telephone and left the line open, resting the receiver on the random files he had pulled previously.

He couldn't be certain that his actions would improve the life of the Will in this world, but that Will would be free of Hannibal, which was a good start. He had done as much as he cared to.

He pressed the red button, and the trailer lost its only living inhabitant to the void.

The Young Monster

The monster of Florence.

He looked so young. Already an experienced killer, but only beginning to dip his toes into the artistry that would become inextricably linked to his sense of self.

Will wondered how long Hannibal had spent honing his talent with a pencil, drawing the works of the masters, before he realized he could try to create a different sort of masterpiece with a sharper tool. How many people had Hannibal killed before he began to make artworks of his kills?

It wasn't something they had ever discussed. In general, they had preferred to keep the past in the past. For their own sanities, they had needed to avoid the accusations and resentments that stemmed from a relationship marked with betrayals and grievous bodily harm. They had been happiest living in the moment.

Will and Regret are old friends, though. He is sure they are bound to meet again very soon. Grief would undoubtedly make an appearance as well.

He decided not to think about it.

The young Hannibal, a new monster, was kneeling on a sheet of plastic in a dark room. He and his victim were in a pool of bright light, while Will hovered on the edge, in the darkness. He thought it likely Hannibal knew he — or rather, someone — was there, regardless.

He had cut open a living, whimpering young woman with a neat incision, bright red with gushing blood. Her ribs, bloody and fragile, had been snapped and forced open, like the doors of a cage. It seemed that Hannibal might be examining her organs before making his selections to be stored in the cooler at his side. Shopping for his next meal.

"How does her liver look?" Will asked, smirking to himself. Understanding now that someone else was there, the girl's frantic but weak screams attempted to pry themselves out from under the edges of the gag she wore. He noticed, then, that her wrists and ankles were secured to posts. Some kind of basement, then.

As anticipated, Hannibal didn't startle. "Quite healthy, I assure you. Is there something I can help you with?" Despite his arctic tone, Will could see the tension in his shoulders. This boy hadn't perfected his emotional control. He did not yet glitter with the hardness of a diamond when confronted with a threat from a stranger.

"Oh, don't mind me," Will said. "It's interesting to see another person's process."

Finally, the young man turned his head to bring Will into view, his eyebrows drawn in consternation. "How did you get inside?" he finally asked.

Rude, Will thought.

Will shrugged, not knowing what lengths the young man had gone to in his attempt to secure privacy for his unsanctioned surgery. “When you’ve finished, I brought some food. You’re welcome to the second serving if you’d like it. My friend, I suppose you could say, isn’t in a place to enjoy his any longer.”

It was extremely rare to see exasperation on Hannibal’s face, so watching the emotion bloom now made him smile wider. “I guarantee the meal will be up to your standards,” he promised.

Hannibal’s sharp sigh could almost be called a *huff* as he turned his back to Will once again and began separating organs from the girl’s body and carefully packing them away in the ice chest. She lived until he reached her heart, severing the arteries and veins with neat, efficient cuts, though not quite as perfect as his older self could manage. The longer he worked, the more his shoulders relaxed. Will had noticed long ago how meditative organ harvesting could be for his Hannibal. Apparently, it had been so from nearly the beginning.

Will sat on the concrete floor and unpacked the breakfast bag, placing the containers and utensils on the tablecloth Hannibal always kept on hand in his meal sets just in case. The tablecloth might be ruined, white linen on dusty concrete, but as he planned to leave it, he hardly cared.

He didn’t even have to worry about fingerprints, this time. His young self was in his early teens and a long way from Italy.

Will watched with interest as the monster fastened the lid of the ice chest and looked over his shoulder at him. He stared at the tablecloth, food, and utensils with furrowed brow and Will couldn’t help but smile. He was still pissed as hell at his Hannibal, but he was endlessly charmed by this incomplete version of the man he loved and hated passionately.

“Is it poisoned?” Hannibal finally said. His accent was even thicker than Will was used to.

“Of course not,” Will assured. “My friend would never do that to the food. If I was going to kill you, it wouldn’t be with poison.”

“Is that so? How would you do it?”

“With my hands. More personal, that way.”

Young Hannibal’s eyes flashed with heat for just a moment, before he tucked his emotions back into his partially-unbuttoned person suit.

After another several moments, Hannibal finally accepted his invitation. He crossed the floor between the corpse and the tablecloth and carefully lowered himself until he was seated. He popped open the container, looking at it curiously, before taking up the fork and giving the protein scramble a taste. His eyelids fluttered closed in evident pleasure, and he ate his share at a polite pace.

Will ate his with enthusiasm. He felt absolutely starved. He hadn’t gone *that* long without eating, but he wasn’t used to missing meals any longer, with Hannibal keeping him well fed.

“You are like me,” Hannibal stated. “This meat was human.”

“Hmm,” Will responded noncommittal. He placed his container and utensil back onto the tablecloth.

“It was very good.”

“Knew you’d think so,” he said, baring his teeth in a feral grin. “Now…”

Without warning, Will sprang across the tablecloth at Hannibal, hands reaching for his soft, smooth neck. He straddled the younger body, holding it still with his knees. He found his target and gripped tight, contentedly absorbing the sensation of crunching cartilage underneath his thumbs and the rabbit-quick pulse under his fingers.

Hannibal thrashed and clawed, but he was so young. Inexperienced. He wasn’t much, to someone used to wrestling with a much more skilled version on a regular basis. Will smiled at him, kindly. “Don’t take it personally,” he said. “You haven’t done the things I’m punishing you for. But you would. You’re already on the path. Best end it now.”

Will was chagrined when he felt the sharp stab of a scalpel in his side. “Little bastard,” he muttered through clenched teeth. “Nice try, though.” As if being stabbed would cause him to lose his grip. He would have rolled his eyes if he wasn’t watching the young Hannibal’s face so intently. He’d never seen so many distraught emotions on Hannibal’s face. Not even all those years ago when Will had earned the scar across his belly.

He was mesmerized. Just as charmed by this young Hannibal’s death throes as he had been by his behavior earlier. Will held tight until the pulse slowed, then stopped. Another Hannibal who would never trouble another Will.

He had a few things to do before he would press the red button once more.

—

Meanwhile, in Dimension Two…

Will Graham woke in a Minnesota motel room, jolted out of sleep by his alarm. *Wow,* he thought. *Jack let me sleep until a reasonable hour.*

He took his time in the shower and getting dressed, before finally giving Jack a call to see what was going on. Jack didn’t answer, but texted that he would call back in a few minutes.

Will mentally shrugged and went about making coffee with the complimentary packet of grounds and miniature drip machine. He pulled an energy bar out of his luggage to munch on as he waited. He loved peanut butter energy bars.

He had finished eating and was in the process of sipping his sub-par caffeinated beverage when his phone finally rang.

“Will, you find something?”

"…no? Aren't you coming along? I've been waiting for you."

"I'm in court, Will. I sent Dr. Lecter to accompany you. He isn't there?"

"Wha…? *No*," he confirmed. "I haven't seen him at all."

"I'll try to get in touch with him. If I do, I'll tell him to meet you at the first construction site. Get going." *Click*

"Right." Will said to no one. "Get going. Meet up with your psychiatrist babysitter. Get psychoanalyzed. This is going to be so much fun."

He decided, then, to stop talking to himself like a crazy person who might actually need a psychiatrist, and threw all of his belongings back into his luggage. If he was very lucky, he would be able to fly home that evening. Best to be prepared.

He shoved his wallet, phone, and rental car keys inside his pockets before stepping into the bright sunlight. For some reason, he felt like things were going to be okay.

He was even more optimistic when Jack sent the local Police Department to question Garret Jacob Hobbs. Will didn't have any backup, after all. If Hobbs was their guy, Will could go home to his dogs and classes.

Hours later, even after he incredulously viewed the scene featuring the shot-to-death bodies of Dr. Lecter and the secretary, Tracy Rockwell, he still felt like things were going to be okay.

He was going to be just fine.

Many-Worlds Theory

Will brushed calloused fingers over the young monster's soft cheek, a liar even in death. His innocent appearance completely belied his monstrous nature in life.

He couldn't have that.

A search through the previously-ignored storage units lining the basement walls revealed a number of interesting things. Will, extremely desirous of context, poked his head out of the door at the top of the exit steps. He almost laughed. The direction signs on the hallway wall, and the collections of birds and insects in the basement strongly suggested some sort of natural history museum.

Will used his first aid kit to bandage the stab wound in his side after stopping the bleeding with clotting powder. He would need to properly clean and stitch it up later, but it could wait. Next, he packed up the picnic supplies and stowed them inside his bag. He hadn't realized how unused to missing meals he had become, and he would thank himself later if he filled the containers with food when he could, to nourish him in places that had none.

The girl had been dead only twenty or so minutes longer than Hannibal, so he had a bit of time before rigor set in and complicated his plans. He needed to do some reconnaissance before then. He removed his boots and tied them to his bag before returning to the top step. He again opened the door into the hallway, but this time stepped out. He was nearly silent walking only in his socks. He wanted to know if there was a guard, and if there were cameras.

The latter was very unlikely given the time period. The former, it was hard to say. The museum seemed pretty well-maintained. However, Hannibal might have chosen it for its lack of guard, or taken the guard out himself already. There was the girl, but her youth made him question whether or not she had been guarding the place on her own, if she was a guard at all.

He mentally shrugged. The place seemed pretty abandoned, and he hadn't seen anything that could be a camera. Besides, what was the worst that could happen? Someone might interrupt him. And then he could press the red button and disappear before their eyes.

A few hours later, he sat on the polished floor of the exhibit, relieved to be finished. Hauling bodies, finding objects with which to adorn and manipulate them, and then physically arranging and tying them into place always took more energy than you'd think. The result, though, was lovely, if simplistic.

The nameless girl had been arranged on a bed of leaves in a display of deer in a forest. The open rib cage framing the empty cavity of her chest held something new: a red bird specimen, arranged as if in flight, suspended with wire between the now-gleaming white bones. Her metaphorical heart, broken free from its earthly cage. Her body had been draped as if wearing a robe, using clean white painter's cloth from the Janitor's closet. Her clothes had been too blood-soaked to be useful but she deserved her privacy.

Her actual heart served a different purpose.

Hannibal had been arranged off to the side, beneath the stag in the display, sitting on his cooler, which had been camouflaged with a brown tarp. He wore his own stag horns, also specimens from the overflow collection in the basement, as the bird had been. His left elbow perched on his left knee, his face resting in the palm of his hand. His right hand was wrapped around the heart as if it was an apple. Wire encouraged the arm to press the heart against the corpse's teeth, as if about to be bitten.

He didn't know if he could make his message more clear without writing a letter to the police. He would let the piece speak for itself.

Here sits your monster and his last victim. It is over. (You're welcome.)

—

He did laugh when his next hop landed him in a hospital emergency room, presumably the one at Johns Hopkins during Hannibal's years as a surgeon. The multiverse must really want him to get his stab wound stitched up.

Admittedly, he had broken open the clot while dragging bodies around, the bandage was soaked through, and at some point there may have been a sort of *ripping* or *tearing* feeling.

Despite the side-eyes he was getting for his laugh (and perhaps from appearing out of nowhere), he wasted no time approaching the desk while unbuttoning his black shirt. The woman behind the desk watched him with confusion and fascination until he got to the blood-soaked bandage and her expression changed to *understanding.*

After being taken through the department's doors and having his blood pressure and pulse taken, he was given a bed in a small room. A nurse approached soon after.

"So, what did you get stabbed with?" she asked as she studied the bandage.

"Ah, it was…" he squirmed a bit to unbutton the cargo pocket on one of his pant legs and retrieve the scalpel. "This. Sorry, I know you're not supposed to remove the thing that stabbed you. Wasn't intentional. I put some clotting powder on it, but moving too much broke it open again."

"Interesting," she said. "Is that a…scalpel? You get stabbed by a surgeon?"

He laughed, a little startled. "Medical student," he said, shrugging.

"Something we should be aware of?"

"Nah, everything is fine. Just got a little out of hand."

"You been drinking at all?"

"No."

“Drug use?”

“No.”

“Medications?”

“No.”

“Let’s see what we’re dealing with,” she said, pulling gloves on before peeling the bandage away from the wound and wiping away some blood. The edges had become a bit swollen and bruised, but that was hardly surprising.

“You’re lucky your medical student was armed with such a short blade,” she said. “With any luck, a few stitches will fix you up, but don’t quote me on that. I’ll put a fresh bandage on for now and the doctor will be with you as soon as possible.”

“Thanks,” he said.

By the time the doctor - not Hannibal - approached a few minutes later, the adrenaline from the kill, and the excess serotonin from completing the display, had worn off and Will was tired and aching.

“How are you feeling?” the doctor asked.

“A little bit like I got stabbed,” he admitted as the man palpated his abdomen. “But mostly just tired. And old.”

The doctor smirked at that. “At least three of the nurses out there are fanning themselves over your rugged handsomeness, if that makes you feel less old.”

Will laughed. “God, it actually does. Does that mean I should spend more time in emergency departments?”

“Best not,” the doctor disagreed. He studied the scars on Will’s abdomen, shoulders, and face. “If anything, you should spend some time away from sharp objects. Maybe a nice library? Or better yet, the secured section of an airport. TSA’s got your back.”

Will wheezed.

The doctor’s gaze returned to his chart. He felt Will’s pulse, and then grabbed the blood pressure cuff to take a second reading. He seemed satisfied with the results.

“Good news. All signs point to stitches and some rest being sufficient to get you back on your feet.”

—

Still no sign of Hannibal, and Will was precariously close to being released from the hospital. He supposed the man was busy doing emergency surgeries.

Would it be right to kill someone who was saving so many lives? Would negating the effect he would have on this world's Will Graham and preventing a handful of Ripper tableau be worth removing a very talented emergency surgeon from the area's most important hospital?

He honestly hadn't expected to run into any moral quandaries at this point in his travel. But he hadn't exactly planned any of what he was doing.

Maybe an alternative path was in order, just this one time. He pondered the situation for a good two minutes before deciding:

Nah. Who was he kidding? Hannibal had to die. He just wasn't wrapped up in a pretty bow for him this time. He *might* need a plan.

He also needed some sleep.

—

As the cab pulled into the driveway, Will sighed in contentment. His little boat on the sea would always feel like home for him.

The windows were golden beacons in the twilight. The beater Chevy he'd driven before he got the Volvo was parked out front.

He paid the driver with a little bit of the emergency cash from his bag, and wasted no time climbing the steps and knocking. After a minute or so, the door swung open, a young Will looking annoyed. Then confused. Then frightened.

"Nope," he said before slamming the door.

Will politely knocked again. "Will, it's okay. I'm not a hallucination. You aren't losing your mind. I promise."

"That's what a hallucination would say," came the muffled reply through the door.

"You learned about the Many-Worlds Theory in fifth grade from Mr. Mendoza. You read everything you could get your hands on and you filled notebooks with your thoughts and questions. You tried to forget about it after college because law enforcement doesn't attract the most open-minded of people and you didn't want to seem like even more of a freak than you already thought you were. At least, that's how it happened in my world. Was it the same here?"

The door opened very slowly, revealing a wary Will flanked by Buster and Ellie, the first members of his old pack. Their tails were wagging happily, their cute doggy grins on full display. Will could do nothing but smile back at them, his eyes watering. If everything had turned out the way it had for him, Will was a new lecturer at the FBI Academy, having faced rejection of his application to become a student there only months before.

"Look, I barely passed the psych evaluations to get into the program," Will said. "The last thing I need is hallucinations getting me kicked out."

“Huh. You passed the evaluations here? Good job. I failed mine. Became a lecturer instead.” He was genuinely impressed and curious.

“What, didn’t you lie? That’s how I passed.”

“I did,” Will admitted. “But not as well as you did, I guess. Or maybe my evaluators were different. Or the test was more strict. Hard to say. Lots of little changes from universe to universe. May I come in?”

After another moment of hesitation, the younger Will acceded, stepping back from the doorway.

The moment he was through the threshold, Will dropped to his knees to pet and kiss his lost friends. He must have smelled enough like their Will to seem safe, because they had no problem licking his face and pressing their noses into the palms of his hands begging for pets. “Good dogs,” he crooned at them. “Haven’t seen these two in a long time,” he admitted to his younger self. Seeing the look on his face, he tried to reassure him, “If you can’t tell from the gray in my hair, I’m a few decades older than you are. You know what their lifespans are like.”

The other Will nodded after a few beats of hesitation, sympathy clear on his face.

“So…why are you here? Do you have to, I don’t know, save the world or something?”

“A few reasons,” he admitted. “One, I was hoping I could crash here for the night.”

“That’s fine, I guess.”

“And I need you to spend some time with people who know you in a public place tomorrow while I’m murdering a serial killer. I’m not certain I can guarantee no witnesses, and I need you to have a bulletproof alibi.”

“You’ve got to be kidding.”

“Nope. Listen, Will, if I don’t kill him now he’s going to ruin your life someday. Even if you get him locked up somehow, that doesn’t mean anything to him. He’ll escape to kill again and probably frame you for murder for fun.”

“You’re speaking from experience, I take it.”

“Spent some time in the BSHCI for murders I didn’t commit, yeah,” he agreed.

“Jesus. No wonder you’re jumping from world to world. That place probably made you insane.”

“I swear, I need no involvement from you beyond a place to sleep, maybe some breakfast, and the assurance that you’ll spend the entire day and evening around people who can vouch for you.”

“I can’t believe this is happening. Christ. Fine. Have you had dinner?” he asked as he turned to walk away. “I have some mac and cheese,” he said over his shoulder.

Will watched his younger self walk away from him, towards the kitchen, and was struck with realization. For the first time, he understood why people found him attractive.

“Mac and cheese sounds great,” he said.

Reminder of Better Times

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will nuzzled into the warm skin beneath his cheek, breathing in the familiar and comforting scent. In his sleep, his arm had happily wrapped itself around the other's waist, taking advantage of a comfort that he denied himself almost always.

Some part of him knew that the body beside him was an older version of his own, a visitor from another dimension. That was probably part of the appeal. He believed that he was safe with himself, even a version he didn't know much about. A version that had taken a different path in life and apparently suffered things that he wished other versions of himself not to suffer.

He was sad for his older self. The other man contained so much darkness. Will hoped that he wouldn't suffer the things that would bring out his darkness like that. It was hard enough going through the Academy, trying not to get lost in the cases he sat in lectures about, keeping the killers they studied out of his head.

Knowing the other man had spent time in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Will could only shudder at the thought of how many insane killers could get suck inside of his head forced to stay in a place like that. He could forgive any darkness he sensed.

He wouldn't pretend the man was *good*, but he seemed to be a product of his life experiences rather than somebody *evil*. He would give him the benefit of the doubt and try to make his stay as painless as possible.

—

Will kissed the curly hair on the crown of the younger Will's head, cradling his face against his chest. He remembered how touch-starved he'd been at that age. His one-night-stands all came with the expectation that a few minutes after they had finished, he would get dressed and leave. Cuddling through the night wasn't something he had opportunity to enjoy as a young man.

It was still early. They wouldn't need to stir for another little while, when the young Will would need to rise to attend classes.

Except, that wasn't entirely true, was it?

He heard the clicking of nails on hardwood before a cold nose pressed against his foot where it protruded beyond reach of the blankets. He couldn't stop the instinctive flinch and *hiss*.

"Something wrong?" his young self asked sleepily.

"Just one of the dogs making it known that they are awake," Will said with a chuckle.

The younger man laughed. “I guess I should feed them.” His reluctance was obvious.

“Let me,” Will said. “I’ll be right back. Keep my spot warm.” He ruffled the younger man’s hair, ignoring his grumbling, before climbing out of bed and onto the cold floor.

Thing was, at this time in his life, Will slept on a pull-out sofa bed and owned no other bed or furniture that could be slept on. When Will asked his younger self if he could crash at his place, he had envisioned sleeping on a sofa or guest bed having forgotten that he had owned neither at that age.

But if you couldn’t trust yourself, who could you trust? The both of them had been comfortable with sharing a bed. Even if they often distrusted their own minds, the instinct to trust each other was strong.

He made quick work of feeding the pups, happily giving out ear scratches and endearments. Once the food had been distributed and the water bowls refilled, he left his two old friends to enjoy their breakfast before returning to bed.

The younger Will immediately clung to him once again. It was endearing, but made him feel a little bit melancholy. Would this Will find a relationship as profound as the one he had shared with Hannibal, if he eliminated Hannibal from this world? Would he truly be better off? Would he, perhaps, meet Molly once again and truly make a go of things with her, without the memory of Hannibal ruining everything?

His instinct was that the younger man would be better off finding human connection elsewhere. He rubbed the other man’s back rhythmically, enjoying the smooth skin and healthy muscles beneath his hand. Whether connection could be found with Alana, Molly, or someone else, Will believed that his younger self would connect eventually. He would be better without Hannibal. Perhaps he wouldn’t connect as profoundly, but he could be *happier* and that counted for a lot.

Before the men left the bed to prepare for their days, Will cupped his younger self’s jaw and pulled him into a sweet, chaste kiss. A *good luck* of sorts. For both of them.

The younger Will *giggled* in response. “Okay, that was a little weird,” he said with a grin that revealed he hadn’t actually minded.

God, younger-him was *adorable.* Why had he always been so self-conscious?

—

“The less you know, the better,” Will told the younger man. “Drop me somewhere in the neighborhood of Chandler Square, a park maybe. You’re in class until when?”

“Five-ish,” he replied. “And then I guess I’ll go to one of the study groups I usually avoid?”

“That’ll last until…”

“Maybe eight?”

“The Academy library doesn’t close until midnight, correct? After your group, go study in the library, somewhere obvious. Stay until closing. If all goes well, you won’t need an alibi. But I need you to have one in case something goes wrong. I won’t be sticking around afterward, so I won’t be able to help after the fact.”

“So this is goodbye?” He seemed almost sad.

“Afraid so,” he said. “Don’t worry. Your life will be better than mine, and I’ll be hopping dimensions like we dreamed about as kids.” He ran his fingers through the young man’s curls and massaged his scalp for a moment, making young Will’s breath uneven. “Before I go… you’re a beautiful man, Will. Don’t let our perpetual self-conscious streak get in the way of your life like it did mine. And keep an open mind. Give bisexuality a try.” He winked.

The young Will barked out a laugh. “Uh huh. I’ll get right on that.”

“Seriously. Don’t limit yourself. Have a good life.”

“You too. Good luck.”

Will leaned in for one last kiss, the younger man’s soft lips and shaky breath oddly thrilling.

It was a different take on “learning to love oneself” for sure, but he wasn’t sure he’d ever felt as comfortable with himself as he did after, well, *spending time with himself*.

Perhaps he would track down the Will Grahams of other dimensions, as well.

—

Will put on his sunglasses, a poor disguise but better than nothing, and walked around the park for a few hours, enjoying the birdsong and the green foliage. He tried to ignore the ugly fountain and concrete walkways, scars through a lovely landscape. Finally, it was time for the next phase of his plan.

Hannibal was gone to work. Hannibal’s home was likely not very secure. The arrogant man always believed that the only security system he needed was himself. If he did have a system, Will could likely guess the PIN.

Will circled around to the back of Hannibal’s house and entered his yard, preferring the privacy when picking a lock. The yard was a lovely little thing, clearly inspired by Japan with a small maple tree and a tiny bridge over a koi pond. Green ferns and miniature clover made the space seem effortless instead of overdone.

He wore his favorite black nitrile gloves. It was a simple lock. Not even a challenge.

When he entered, he breathed the sweet scents of the vertical herb garden while he scanned the doorway and surrounding wall for sensors, then quickly made his way to the front door to check for a pin pad. Nothing. No sensors. No indication of an alarm system, as he suspected.

He felt some relief that he still knew enough to have an advantage here.

His next task was to collect the spare key to the Bentley. There was no point in trying to break into it. Maybe someone with much more experience than he had could manage it, but for him, breaking into the house to steal the key was the obvious choice.

As expected, the key was in a locked drawer in the office. He stowed it in his bag.

He needed to be careful with the next part. He needed Hannibal to not realize he was there until it was too late, so disguising his scent to some extent was essential. The easiest way to do that would be to use Hannibal's products and wear some of his clothes.

He had intentionally not used any product at all when he showered that morning in Wolf Trap. His hair was a little bit lank, but he smelled pretty neutral. He wasn't willing to shower at Hannibal's and risk leaving DNA evidence behind, so he would have to settle for wearing the clothes and cologne, and some soap, shampoo, and conditioner rubbed on his body in small amounts. Was all of that necessary? Maybe not. Could it make him stand out more instead of less? Maybe. He hadn't tried to fool Hannibal's olfactory sense into overlooking him before. Live and learn.

—

It had been a nightmare trying to find neutral clothes in Hannibal's closet. Finally, he was able to find a black shirt that only showed purple designs at certain angles, and some black trousers with very thin green pinstripes. He'd forgotten how ridiculous Hannibal's entire wardrobe had been when he lived in Baltimore.

Later on, when they were on the run and living under assumed names, Hannibal often incorporated less flashy pieces into his wardrobe. More practical. There was always some flash, of course. Hannibal was a peacock who absolutely needed his plaids, polka dots, paisleys, checks, stripes, herringbone, houndstooth…he could go on. But when lying low, relatively, he hadn't been ignorant of the need to dress whatever part he was playing.

The same had gone for Will, in the opposite direction, dressing up instead of down. Hannibal loved to drag him to tailors for custom-made suits and tuxedos, cobblers for bench-made leather shoes, milliners for bespoke hats, and perfumers for fragrances to complement his personal body chemistry. Will had to admit that the now-familiar sensations of silk and cashmere against his skin were welcome. Hopefully he wouldn't have to abandon the luxurious clothes right away.

Several hours later had Will more-or-less relaxed in the backseat of the Bentley. He wore a black hairnet for the sake of practicality. By the time Hannibal arrived that evening, Will had almost fallen asleep. The chirp of the security system and click of the locks brought him back to awareness. He smiled, excited to see if his design would work.

Hannibal seemed not to suspect anything as he opened the door and entered. After closing the door, he reached back for the seatbelt and *clicked* it into place, then inserted the key into the ignition.

He may never truly know whether or not his design had been unsuccessful and Hannibal had only been waiting on him to make a move, or if Hannibal's reflexes were *that good*.

Will brought the knife in his right hand up to Hannibal's throat, wishing to make a clean cut in memory of sad little Abigail. He'd been dreaming about Hannibal's blood splashed across glass, and a windshield would work just fine. But just before the knife made contact, Hannibal gripped his arm like a vice with both of his own hands, easily holding it away from its target.

Unfortunately for Hannibal, Will knew him quite well. Hannibal didn't expect his left hand to snake around the seat at waist-level holding an impressive hunting knife, the stag antler handle beautifully patinated from age and handling. He stabbed towards himself hard, with Hannibal's gut and the seatback between himself and the blade. The steel was buried deep into Hannibal's belly before it was retracted, only to slice just as deeply a few inches higher.

Hannibal's moan reminded Will of better times. The surgeon released Will's right arm with one of his, reaching down to feel the knife handle and the gushing blood. As he weakened, so did his other arm, and Will finally had the privilege of cutting Hannibal's throat.

The splash of red blood against the windshield wasn't as energetic as it would have been had Will not stabbed him in the belly before cutting his throat, but it was satisfying enough. The yellow light from outside the car wasn't moonlight, but blood was beautiful no matter the illumination.

Will's lips were curved in a satisfied smile as he whispered promises into another dying Hannibal's ear.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for the comments and kudos! I appreciate every single one even when I don't reply. You are all lovely.

Ghost of Christmas Future

Dimension Four

Beverly Katz collapsed into the chair across from him, her satchel landing with a *thud* on the carpeted floor of the library's study section. "What're you up to, Graham cracker?"

He glared at her without true malice. "What does it look like, Miss Kitty Katz?"

She snickered, then leaned forward conspiratorially, elbows braced on the study table. "You hear what happened at Johns Hopkins?"

"What, aside from the Marvels of Modern Medicine?"

"Very funny," she said while rolling her eyes. "One of the surgeons got *murdered!*"

"Huh. He lose a patient with a nutjob relative or something?" he asked.

"They have no idea what the motive might have been. He was basically *slaughtered* in his *Bentley*. What kind of douchebag drives a Bentley?"

"Independently wealthy or very successful douchebags, I guess? Slaughtered how?"

"Knew that'd catch your attention," she said with a fierce grin. "Stabbed in the gut *twice* while having his throat cut."

"Jesus. He offend a crime lord or something?"

"Mmm. Who knows? But Delaney heard from one of the techs working the scene that the blood spray in front of the guy was uninterrupted, so whoever got him might have pulled the old *hiding in the back seat* trick. I check the back seat every time I get in my car, ever since we studied the case with the 'back seat killer' - what a lame nickname."

He shrugged. "Could have been worse, I guess?" He wondered if the murder had anything to do with his dimension-hopping visitor. He'd said he was there to kill a serial killer. He could easily imagine a surgeon being a serial killer. Surgeons were notorious narcissists, and rumor had it that psychopathic surgeons weren't uncommon.

As long as he personally didn't receive any blame, he supposed that he didn't much care. It did remind him, though, of what his visitor had said. He looked at his classmate, one of the few he got along with so well and felt comfortable with. It hadn't escaped his notice that she was beautiful, too.

"Hey Bev," he said, meeting her eyes with some effort. "You want to grab dinner together sometime? I've heard good things about the new place on 6th Ave."

—

Dimension Two

"Are you serious, Jack? I have to see a psychiatrist because some guy I met once and thought was kind of an asshole got shot to death?"

"There's also the situation with the Hobbs capture."

"What situation? I tagged along with the locals. The perp pulled a knife and the locals shot him. He's in jail. How is that a situation?"

"It would make me feel better if before you returned to the field…"

"I'll stop you right there. Jack, I am a *lecturer* when I'm not *writing academic papers*. I don't need or want to consult for you. I was doing you a favor with the Hobbs case. When did I ever once say that helping you out with one case meant I would *return to the field*? If you wanted me *in the field*, the selection committee shouldn't have rejected my application to become a Special Agent. If you need to contact me in the future, you can do so through HR."

Will stormed out of Jack's office without another word. "Fucking asshole," he muttered under his breath in the hallway.

—

Current Dimension(s)

The next several worlds Will visited were very boring.

He killed a Hannibal who was fucking a Bedelia. That is to say, he tied Hannibal up and let him watch as Will slowly tortured Bedelia to death, before cutting Hannibal's throat. Hannibal had rather enjoyed it. For about a minute it had brought back memories of his own Hannibal's betrayals. But mostly he'd been unimpressed by witnessing another facet of the foolish man's extended temper tantrum. For being a psychiatrist, Dr. Hannibal Lecter had the absolute worst coping mechanisms.

He killed a sad, lonely Hannibal who was locked up in the BSHCI with an injection of cyanide. Hannibal had thought he was dreaming or hallucinating, had let Will climb right into his bed and inject the poison into his vein. It had almost been sweet. He had done that Hannibal a favor by putting the man out of his misery.

He *was* kind of amused to pop into what must have been Hannibal and Jack's first meeting at Hannibal's office. To avoid serious injury to himself, he quickly shot each of them. It was very pleasing to know that the Will of that world would be free of *both* men who made his life hell. It was much too fast, though, to be enjoyable. The oddly pristine copy of the personnel file detailing the history of that world's Will Graham was slipped into his bag for later perusal.

The world after that was only slightly more to his taste.

He found himself in his old kitchen in Wolf Trap. The sink did not contain an ear. There were small differences, dish towels he hadn't owned, a dog door in the back. Why hadn't he

thought of that?

He could hear someone moving around in the direction of the living room. He didn't bother with stealth. If it was another version of himself, he would talk him around like he had the agent-in-training. If it was somebody else, well, it was Will Graham's house and he was Will Graham.

The sounds stopped as soon as his footsteps started. Hannibal was completely still when Will found him, the other man clearly having been interrupted from digging around in Will's fishing fly collection. Dirty rotten son of a bitch, this had been Hannibal's first major mistake when it came to Will. Well, second mistake if he were to count hiding the encephalitis. He could see Hannibal glance at his hair and study his face. He had picked up a change of clothes from Hannibal's closet in Italy so would describe his current style as *peacock-lite* and he certainly looked older. This Hannibal, unlike the one with breakfast several jumps ago, knew him well enough to note the difference with certainty.

"Framing Will, Hannibal? Really? You think that's the best plan?"

"That is an interesting hypothesis," Hannibal deflected like a coward, glancing to either side of himself, perhaps wondering if he was suffering a hallucination. "Who are you? You are not Will Graham."

"Sure I am. Perhaps you can think of me like the Ghost of Christmas Future."

"I would rather not."

"I would rather you didn't frame Will. I would rather you tell him about the encephalitis so he can receive treatment, instead of dooming him to a psychiatric hospital where every *patient* he comes across will worm their way into his overheated brain. *How does that make you feel?*"

"I believe there has been a misunderstanding."

Will seriously doubted it. He recognized some of the flies as the ones containing human remains. "Let's take a walk, Hannibal. You can explain as we get some fresh air."

Will felt almost normal taking a walk with Hannibal. It was a nice morning. Cold and clear, a slight breeze, no rain. The dogs, who had been let outside by Hannibal, were having a grand time running and playing. It brought a smile to Will's face. He waited until they were closer to the barn than the house to begin the conversation. "So, Hannibal. Explain."

"I only wished to add to Will's collection with my modest contributions. Gifts, of sorts, but I feared that he would not accept them so thought to simply add them to his collection."

"Oh yeah?" Will said in a faux-sweet voice. "How thoughtful." *What bullshit.* His assumption confirmed, he decided not to waste any more time. He pulled his hand out of his pocket and swung his arm towards Hannibal's body.

Hannibal intercepted Will's arm and redirected the syringe it held to Will's own thigh. Will tried not to smile as Hannibal injected him with the harmless saline solution. Will began to act weak and ill, playing up his supposed poisoning, and gave Hannibal a pleading look. Predictably, he took Will in his arms and began to gently lay him on the ground, no longer deemed a threat. Hannibal could be courteous for a serial killer, but mostly he was stupid when it came to Will.

The thing about killing different versions of Hannibal every time was that the man could never learn from the mistakes of his fellows. Will *almost* felt bad for pulling another fake-out so soon after the time with the knives in the Bentley, but mostly he found great amusement in seeing Hannibal lose control of his muscles due to a stun gun being fired into his back.

Once Hannibal had gone down, Will smashed him over the head with a rock to knock him out, then strangled him to death. It was going to be a long day, and this was just the start of it.

A Long Day

Once Hannibal had gone down, Will smashed him over the head with a rock to knock him out, then strangled him to death. It was going to be a long day, and this was just the start of it.

Will stood from where he was straddling Hannibal, flexing his aching hands. Strangling people was *satisfying* but he always managed to forget that it was harder than it looked. Putting his weight behind his arms helped, but the process still required a great deal of squeezing. He thought he might need some compression gloves to wear beneath his usual black nitrile, and some squeeze balls for exercise, if he intended to keep strangling in his repertoire.

There were more important things to think about just then, though. He couldn't jump dimensions and leave a dead Hannibal in the yard of this world's Will. With the hallucinations and lost time his other self had likely been dealing with, he might think that he'd had something to do with the death. Not ideal.

For the moment, he would take a look at the barn.

He picked the padlock, opened the door, and half-dragged the corpse inside. Unfortunately, the chest freezer contained more fish than he would be able to fit inside the normal freezer in the house, and he would have to partially dismember the body to fit it inside anyway. He sighed. The huge black trash bags used to collect yard waste might suffice as a temporary shroud.

After fretting for a moment, he almost smacked himself in the face. He knew what to do. It should have been obvious. He just got a little bit irrationally nervous at the thought of accidentally implicating another Will Graham in a murder.

After abandoning the idea of using the plastic bags to wrap Hannibal, he exited the barn with only one bag and used the keys he had lifted from the body to unlock the Bentley. He draped the driver's seat with the bag before he climbed in, carefully backed the ridiculous car up to the barn, and popped the trunk. Hannibal's trunk was, of course, already ideal for hauling corpses. Empty and protected by an easily-cleaned cargo liner. The man's own body fit inside perfectly, and Will gently closed the trunk lid with a small smile on his lips.

Back inside the house, Will gathered up Hannibal's fishing flies and stashed them in his bag. He made sure the dogs were fed, watered, and safe, then kissed each of them on the nose before closing and locking the door on his way out.

In the Bentley, he un-crushed a fedora that he pulled from his bag and opted to wear Hannibal's own sunglasses. Wayfarers. How *trendy*. He had no idea where this world's Will was, no idea what the date was, but he hoped he had an alibi. Once someone inevitably reported Hannibal as missing, the Bentley might be found on the traffic cameras, and the decades of age he had on Will would not translate as clearly to surveillance cameras. He

would try to avoid them as much as possible, but it would be naive to think that he would be able to manage evading them entirely.

Unfortunately, murdering a serial killer was still considered *murder*.

—

Will had never used Hannibal's Baltimore garage before, but he was utterly unsurprised to discover that the interior door opened into the pantry. The setup wasn't unheard of: it was convenient to be able to load groceries from the car directly into the pantry. Hannibal just happened to have a much less innocent interpretation of what *groceries* were.

He popped the hatch into the basement and listened. Chances were pretty decent that Miriam Lass was down there. If she was, she was being quiet.

Not particularly caring about the condition of Hannibal's body, Will pushed him through the trap door and let him tumble down the stairs. Rigor mortis was beginning to set in, which lent a certain humor to the tumble. He followed behind casually, flicking the main lights on once he reached the bottom. The basement looked much larger than it should have been.

It took a moment before he noticed the silhouette of a silent and still woman, presumably Miriam, behind a curtain of plastic. With any luck, she would stay put at least until he left.

He dragged Hannibal, not yet completely rigid, over to one of his refrigerator/freezer units and propped his body against a door. Spotting what he was looking for through the glass of an adjacent freezer, Will opened it and retrieved a vacuum-sealed pack of sausages. Grinning, he used his own pocket knife to slit open the plastic, then pulled the links out. He snickered as he arranged them on Hannibal's head like a crown. *The little things were what made everything worth it.*

He returned the empty plastic to the fridge, then exited the basement, leaving the lights on.

He took the opportunity to pick up some snacks from the pantry to refill his bag: nuts, dried cranberries, a wheel of cheese, some fresh fruit and a bottle of wine. Back in the garage, he retrieved the plastic bag from the seat and stuffed it into his bag, before making his way back through the pantry into the main house. He wanted Hannibal and his secrets to be found sooner rather than later, so he propped open the front door before retreating back into the dark of the hallway. Once again in the garage, he exited through the normal doorway onto the street. He hoped Miriam would stay put until someone found her and Hannibal.

Will realized he was still wearing his fedora and Hannibal's sunglasses about half a block away, and laughed at himself. No wonder the pantry and basement had seemed extra dark.

Once he was a few miles away from Hannibal's, he caught a cab and headed back to Wolf Trap. His task was not yet complete.

—

His other self had yet to return home by the time he arrived in Wolf Trap once again. That was fine. He needed to shower, do some laundry, and clean up the picnic kit he had shoved in his bag. It would do him some good to spend time with the dogs, as well. All seven of them. The thought brought happy tears to his eyes.

—

Will Graham gestured Abel Gideon or Garret Jacob Hobbs, he couldn't tell which, into the open front door of Hannibal's house. The open door was strange, but he couldn't really think just then, and all that mattered was taking his prisoner to Dr. Lecter. He didn't know why that was important, but he thought that trying to reason anything out might make his head explode.

"Dr. Lecter!" he called into the dark bowels of the house. "Dr. Lecter, are you here?!" He pushed his captive into the kitchen, where Dr. Lecter liked to be. "Hello? Doctor?"

The answer he received was not from Dr. Lecter.

"Hello?" a vaguely familiar voice, a woman's voice, called back. "Hello?"

"Who's there?" Will responded.

"Miriam. Is Jack Crawford with you?"

"Miriam…Lass?"

The woman, definitely Miriam Lass, emerged from the door leading into the pantry. She had one intact arm, and a securely bandaged stump on her other side. Still, she looked much stronger than Will was feeling.

"Where's Dr. Lecter?" Will begged Miriam, desperately. "I need help."

"I don't know," Miriam said. "I can try to help. What do you need?"

"Him," Will said, pointing at his captive. "Who is he?"

Miriam tilted her head to one side. "I don't know who he is. I don't recognize him." She shook her head, face sympathetic.

"Is he bald?"

"No, not at all. He has brown hair and a sort of goatee?"

"Gideon," he breathed. The confirmation cleared his head slightly, and he finally recognized Abel Gideon as the person accompanying him. "Abel Gideon, you are under arrest. You have the…" he trailed off.

"Sir?" Miriam asked. "Are you okay?" Will was trembling, his eyes rolling back in his head.

“I think he’s having a seizure,” Gideon told Miriam. “You might consider calling 9-1-1. Get the poor man an ambulance.”

“Right,” she agreed, crossing to the telephone. As she dialed, she looked back at the man. “He was going to arrest you. Why?”

“Oh, nothing much,” he said. “Just a little bit of trouble.”

“Right,” she said with dubiousness to Gideon before redirecting her words to the phone. “Yes, I need an ambulance at this address. There is a man having a seizure. No, I don’t know anything except that he’s having a seizure and looks feverish. Send police too. I think there is a criminal here, not the one having a seizure. Sorry, I need to go.” She laid the phone receiver down on the cradle.

“Are you going to come quietly, sir?” Miriam inquired with genuine politeness.

“No, I don’t think I will,” he said. “But I would just *hate* for anything to happen to a nice girl like you. So I’ll leave you alone, and you’ll leave me alone. Yes?”

Miriam considered. She wasn’t fully recovered from the amputation of her arm, and taking someone down with only one arm was difficult on the best of days. “Yes,” she agreed. “You should probably leave before the ambulance gets here.”

Gideon bowed his head in her direction. “Best of luck!” He said with a smirk. “I hope Mr. Graham gets the help he needs. Seizures can be such a *terrible* sign, *especially* when they happen to someone in his condition. Looks *awful*, doesn’t he. Maybe he has something really fun, like a brain tumor!” he said with a giggle as he exited the kitchen towards the front door.

“Please leave the door open!” she called after him.

“Sure thing!” he said.

His footsteps faded away, and she was left with a pale and sweaty man who seemed half out of his mind. “Sir? Mr. Graham?” she said. “Can you talk?”

“Wha…?” he tried.

“The ambulance is coming,” she said.

“Gideon?”

“I had to let him go. I’m sorry. You’re sick and I’m not strong enough to fight him. But the police are coming and hopefully he won’t be able to get too far before they go looking for him.”

“Hannibal?”

“I don’t know who that is,” Miriam said. “I’m sorry.”

“Jack?”

“Jack Crawford? You know him?” her voice was hopeful.

“Have you called him?” he asked, eyes closed in exhaustion.

“No,” she admitted. “I can call him now if you give me his number.”

He patted his pockets in search of his phone, pulling it out as soon as he found it and shoving it at Miriam carelessly. “PIN 3791” he said. “Wait…what are you doing here?”

Miriam ignored Mr. Graham. The phone already showed three missed calls from Jack, so she didn’t even have to scroll through the list of contacts. She simply returned the call.

“Will? Where the hell are you?!” Jack’s familiar shout leapt from the speaker.

“Hi Mr. Crawford,” Miriam said. “It’s Miriam. Is Will the person this phone belongs to?”

“…”

“Sir? Are you there?”

“Miriam?”

Improbabilities

“Yes, Jack, it’s me. I’m here with Mr. Graham waiting for an ambulance. He had a seizure.”

“Miriam. Are you okay?” His voice was as steady as ever, but there was an underlying note of…something.

“I’m not sure. I’m okay right now,” she said. It was nice to hear a friendly voice, at the very least.

“Where are you?”

“A kitchen, in a home. Mr. Graham came here looking for someone called Dr. Lecter.”

“On my way,” Jack said.

—

Jack and the ambulance seemed to arrive at the same time. “In here! The kitchen!” Miriam called towards the hallway.

The EMT group bustled through the doorway with their bags and a stretcher as Jack stayed back out of the way, hovering. Miriam directed the team towards Will, who was still on the ground, sometimes coherent and sometimes mumbling. He looked bad, his clothing and curly hair soaked in sweat, eyes glazed and expression confused. It tore at her heart. She briefed the EMTs on what had happened, approximately how long the seizure had lasted, what he’d said when coherent. Before long, he was being rolled into the hallway right past Jack on the way to the ambulance.

She could hear Jack asking which hospital they would be taking him to, and she waited patiently. She didn’t know how long it had been since she was captured, but it seemed like several months at least. She felt sharper as more time passed, less the zombie she had felt like before, more like her old self.

“Miriam,” Jack said. He stood somewhat stiffly just inside the kitchen, his expression a complicated mess of emotions.

“Hi,” Miriam said. “It’s good to see you, sir.” She waved at him, awkwardly.

“You’re alive.” His pursed lips seemed to tremble.

“I am, yes,” she nodded.

“How are you here?” he asked, eyes shiny with unshed tears. Not something she would have expected to see from Jack Crawford. Maybe he wasn’t quite the slab of unshakable stone some of her classmates had jokingly referred to him as.

“I think I’ve been here a while,” Miriam admitted. “I think I was somewhere by the sea before. I’m not sure how long I’ve been gone, sir. I think I was drugged, and it’s only just wearing off.”

“Drugged. In Hannibal Lecter’s house?” a hint of disbelief, perhaps confusion, had crept into his voice.

“I can show you where I was when I heard Mr. Graham calling for help,” she offered. “It’s…I think there might be something wrong with this place.”

“Show me,” he said with unaccustomed gentleness.

She led him into the pantry and down the stairs that were no longer covered by a hatch.

“Son of a bitch,” Jack whispered as they reached the floor and some of the butchering and meat cutting equipment came into view.

“Sir, there’s a body over here.” Miriam was facing in the opposite direction.

“Yeah, I bet there is,” he said as he turned. The surprise and horror painting his face said plainly that he hadn’t expected that *particular* body.

“He’s the Chesapeake Ripper, isn’t he, sir? I was looking for the Ripper when I disappeared. And this basement…” she shook her head.

“Miriam,” he said with forced gentleness. “I want you to get looked at in Medical at Quantico. I need to get forensics in here. Do you need me to come with you, or would you be comfortable being escorted by an agent I trust?” Before he had finished speaking, he was speed dialing something on his phone. Miriam didn’t have a chance to answer before he began ordering a forensics team and additional agents to their current location.

“Whatever you think is best, sir,” she said once Jack had ended his call. “Oh, and someone called Gideon was here. I had to let him go, sorry about that, but he shouldn’t be far if he’s still on foot.”

—

“Hi, I’m looking for my son. His name is Will Graham. Do you have a patient by that name?”

“I’ll check for you,” a soothing voice responded. “Just a moment.”

Will had grown worried as the hours had passed without his counterpart appearing. He had taken care of all of his tasks, had a wonderful time playing with the pack, and finally sat down with a book. It had been the most pleasant evening he could recall having in many months.

When the sun had set and dinner time had come and gone, he’d been slightly concerned. When several more hours had passed and the dogs had settled down in their beds to sleep, he really started to worry.

Where was he in the timeline? In what situation would he have left the dogs without care for this long? He wouldn't, unless he was incapacitated.

He scratched at his arm where a blackberry bramble had gotten him earlier as he picked some berries to eat. There was a big patch of them on the route he liked to take when walking the dogs. Blackberry thorn scratches always made him itch.

"Hello, are you still there?" the voice on the phone interrupted his wandering mind.

"Yes. Any news?"

"We do have a Will Graham here. He is in stable condition. I'm afraid that's all I can give you over the phone, but you are of course welcome to visit."

"Of course," he agreed. "Could you pass a message on to his doctors for me?"

"I can do that, sure."

"He's been having high fevers, hallucinations, sleepwalking, and I suspect seizures. If they haven't done an MRI, please do so, even if Will insists he's already had one. It's important."

"I'll be sure to pass that on."

"Thank you. I really appreciate it."

They exchanged goodbyes before hanging up.

What now? Should he actually visit Will in the hospital? Stick around and watch the dogs until Will sent someone else out? *Leave* now that Hannibal wouldn't trouble Will any longer and Will was, hopefully, getting the help he needed?

Getting this involved was complicated and messy. Too much like normal life. He *wanted* to run. He didn't know if he *should*.

—

"How are you feeling?" Jack asked as he entered the hospital room the next day.

"Been better," Will said. "What's going on?"

"How much do you remember from yesterday?" he asked as he took a seat in a guest chair, his jacket over his arm and his hat crushed in a fist.

"I'm not exactly sure how much of it was real," he admitted. "Turns out my brain is inflamed. They're doing tests to find out why." He would also like to know why his previous MRI hadn't turned up anything like *brain inflammation*.

Jack looked slightly concerned, but he didn't acknowledge it verbally. "What do you *think* you remember?"

“After we separated, I remember Garret Jacob Hobbs and thinking I needed to take him to Dr. Lecter. But when I got there, I called for Dr. Lecter. For Hannibal. And instead I saw Miriam Lass, who made me see that Hobbs was Gideon. None of it makes any sense.”

“Why did you think you needed to take him to Dr. Lecter?”

“I don’t know,” he admitted. “He was talking about the Ripper. I thought…I don’t know what I thought. I was half out of my mind.”

A shadow seemed to pass over Jack’s face at his mention of the Ripper. “That sounds pretty accurate, all things considered.”

“How can that be remotely accurate?” he asked, clearly incredulous.

“Are you stable? Physically and, uh, mentally? Is stress going to make you worse?” Jack asked, obviously uncomfortable.

“Since when has that ever mattered, Jack?” he wondered, barely managing to refrain from rolling his eyes.

The other man sighed. “Hannibal Lecter’s house has a basement,” Jack revealed.

“Okay. I guess I assumed he had a wine cellar or something.”

“His basement is currently being photographed, searched, and cataloged by a large forensics team.” He seemed to be bracing himself.

“…his basement is a crime scene?”

“Several times over,” Jack admitted. “You saw Miriam because she came out of the basement when she heard you calling. She called the ambulance and me. She was being held captive down there,” he explained, to Will’s dismay.

“How is she?” Will asked, dread pooling in his gut.

“Aside from the missing arm, she’s fine physically. She’s been through some psychic conditioning that will take time to reverse, but in essentials she’s the same Miriam. She did let Gideon leave, unfortunately. She knew she couldn’t overpower him. He’s still in the wind, and Dr. Bloom is still under guard.”

“And Dr. Lecter?”

“Dead,” Jack said, shaking his head. “Already, when we got there. Miriam says she doesn’t think she did it and I’m inclined to agree, since he appears to have been strangled and she has only one hand.”

Will felt that like a punch to his gut. “I don’t get it,” Will admitted. His brain felt slow. perhaps from the medications dripping into his arm via IV or perhaps because the conversation had turned into *too much*. “What else was in that basement, Jack?”

“What *wasn’t* in that basement? It’s a horror show, Will. We’ll be closing a lot of cases soon. Some families will have closure, but not the satisfaction of seeing him brought to justice.”

“He’s the Ripper.” He wasn’t asking. He knew. A lot of things had been slotting into place during their conversation. He *knew* that Hannibal Lecter was the Chesapeake Ripper. And he was dead. They would never again have one of their *conversations*. That thought didn’t bring the relief it should have.

“We can’t say anything conclusively, yet, but so far the puzzle pieces are fitting into place perfectly.”

—

It wasn’t until the next afternoon, a full day since he had expected Will to come home, that someone pulled into the driveway at Wolf Trap. They used a key to enter, which was a good sign. Will was sitting on the floor and had been reading aloud, all of the dogs clustered around, occasionally jostling each other for more contact with him. They were being very good. Even when they heard the car, they stayed quiet in their group, only the occasional snuffling sound or whine of frustration audible.

When the house door opened, Jack’s worried face turned into one of confusion. “Will?”

Will smirked at him. “Not your Will. I imagine he’s still in the hospital?”

Jack nodded cautiously, eyes narrowed.

“Don’t worry, Jack. I won’t stay here long. Just stopped by this dimension to right some wrongs.”

“This *dimension*,” he said, disbelief clear in his voice. “Right some…wrongs.” His eyes flicked up to Will’s hair, gray streaks evident. Glanced over his face, cataloging the scars and evidence of age.

Will held eye contact with Jack, something he knew the younger version of himself couldn’t manage for very long.

“Impossible.”

“Improbable. For all you know, in the future all kinds of people are given the ability to jump universes. Look, I was just sticking around until someone came to check on the dogs. I can keep looking after them if you’d like to avoid coming all the way out here.”

Jack continued to be grumpy and disbelieving about it, but in the end he was a very results-oriented sort of man. Of course he left Strange Future Will to tend Will’s dogs. Jack did not actually want to care for them himself, even if he had volunteered with Alana unavailable and Hannibal *dead* (and also *a notorious serial killer*).

After a few carefully worded conversations, Will also got the impression that solving the murder of Hannibal Lecter, the Chesapeake Ripper, would be a very low priority. Jack knew he would have liked to have done the same, and in any case there was no use trying to

prosecute someone who wouldn't be staying long in their dimension. Supposedly. Jack was still skeptical, of course.

The next two weeks were idyllic.

Jack came to visit several more times, "just checking in," making sure he hadn't moved on and left the dogs by themselves. As if he would ever do that. The man also dropped off groceries, supplies for making both dog and people food. It was kind of him. He wondered if the friendly repertoire they had built would affect Jack's relationship with the Will of this world.

Will cuddled and played with his long-lost friends, stocked his counterpart's freezers with a lot of freshly caught fish, caught up on sleep, and worked through some things in his head. He hadn't really stopped to *think* since beginning his *project*.

He had a lot to think about.

—

Will returned home from the hospital on a cold but sunny day. Jack had warned him, had *admitted* to him that he had an unusual house guest who has been assisting with the care of the dogs. He had promised that the guest was trustworthy. Will could not for the life of him imagine who Jack would consider trustworthy these days, after experiencing such a devastating blow to his confidence. Trusting someone who turned out to be a serial killer would make anyone question their own abilities to tell the difference between friend and foe.

He parked the Volvo and climbed out stiffly, not yet completely recovered from spending so much time in bed. He was thrilled when the front door opened and seven excited dogs streamed out to greet him. He hugged them and let them lick his face, laughing at the way they danced around him with enthusiasm.

When he looked back up at the house, he expected to see someone like Beverly or Jimmy. Instead, he saw *himself*, a bit older maybe. Scarred. He didn't think he was hallucinating.

"…hi?" he said

"Hey. I was just stopping by this dimension, offered to watch over these guys when Jack came by. Hope you don't mind. It's been a while, for me."

"Uh, thank you. For looking after them." He felt extremely confused.

"It was my pleasure." The man picked up a bag that had been leaning against the side of the house, and slung it over his black-clad shoulder. Everything he wore was black, actually, like he was some kind of Special Ops. Or maybe a theatre technician.

Will thought the man might walk down the stairs, head down the driveway maybe, or approach him to shake hands. But after a moment of fiddling with his wrist watch and smirking at him, he seemed to just disappear.

After a moment of staring at empty space, he pulled out his phone and dialed Jack, who answered after three rings. “Jack? What the fuck. Am I hallucinating or did someone who could pass as *me* just disappear in front of my eyes?”

—

It was unfortunate that he had dressed in his black tactical clothes, because his new location was tropical. It was a place he recognized. He had lived there with Hannibal not long after they fled North America.

And there he was.

Hannibal, sunbathing next to their pool.

Completely nude, of fucking course.

Love and Hate

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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And there he was.

Hannibal, sunbathing next to their pool.

Completely nude, of fucking course.

Will sighed, the sound inaudible amongst the cries of birds, engine traffic on the hill below where he stood, and ocean waves crashing against the beach just out of sight. He stood in the shadows of large evergreen trees, the scent of pine a familiar comfort, large ferns hiding him from sight.

From his vantage point outside the stone wall, Will watched Hannibal slide into the pool to swim a few laps. It had been his preferred method of exercise for many years, but particularly so when recovering from the injuries they had sustained before and after their Fall. Swimming was kinder to the body than many other forms of exercise.

After several minutes, Hannibal used the steps in the shallow end to exit the pool before returning to the wooden lounger and picking up a bottle of sunscreen, squeezing the creamy lotion onto his hand, and slathering himself in it from head to toe. Will's toes might have curled a little bit when Hannibal's large, sunscreen-covered hand wrapped around his own cock, massaging the lotion into the skin, protecting that sensitive area from extremely uncomfortable sun damage.

Their sex life had never been a problem. Will couldn't lie to himself, couldn't pretend that he hadn't missed Hannibal's body since their last morning together. He wondered if Hannibal had at all sensed the *goodbye* inherent to every move Will had made that morning. Every gasp, groan, and hiss. Every thrust, every arch of his back, every swallow, every tilt of his head. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. I love you, I hate you, I'll miss you, *goodbye.*

The Hannibal in front of him, the one who looked so similar to the first one he had left *(the first one he had killed)*, made him ache with want. Despite the limpness of Hannibal's cock, Will's mouth watered.

He stayed in the shadows.

Before long, Will's younger counterpart walked out of the double doors, onto the tiled patio, wearing only a pair of snug blue swim shorts. He held a tray with pineapple slices, a pitcher of red beverage, and two tumblers that he placed on the low table between Hannibal's chair

and the empty one. Hannibal smiled up at him, his maroon eyes glinting in the bright sunlight.

And then Will peeled off his shorts and climbed onto Hannibal's lap.

In the shadows, Will's breath escaped him in a rush as the other Will squeezed a generous helping of sunscreen onto Hannibal's cock and encouraged it to hardness before lining himself up and sinking down, down, until he was fully seated. They did this often enough that no prep was necessary. Will could almost feel the slide along his prostate. Could almost feel Hannibal's tongue where it licked the circle of his nipple. Feel where his teeth sank into the skin at his throat, hard enough to hurt but not break the skin.

In the shadows, Will's breath shook as the other Will gasped and cursed and rode Hannibal hard enough to shake the sturdy wooden chair. Hard enough that even at a distance, Will could see Hannibal's pain mixed with pleasure as he submitted to his younger lover's whims despite his discomfort from still-healing injuries. Hannibal would let Will use him any way he pleased. Hannibal loved it. He loved Will.

In the sunlight, absorbing warmth from the sky and from his lover, Will loved Hannibal.

In the shadows, Will *still* loved Hannibal. Still loved, and hated Hannibal.

He couldn't kill this Hannibal. It wouldn't be fair to a Will who had already survived years of trauma at Hannibal's hands and chosen to run away with him anyway. Just as he, himself, had.

He watched as the men made love, as Hannibal's large hands held Will's hips still against his own, the younger man cursing at the stillness as Hannibal came inside him. As Hannibal pulled him up and off, only to replace his cock with his fingers, the younger man whimpering as they found their mark. He watched as Will came with a sob, painting Hannibal's chest, the cum and silvery curls both glittering under the sun.

In the shadows, Will envied both men as he watched them kiss languidly before cooling off with a brief swim in the pool. They applied sunscreen to each other afterward, and relaxed with their drinks and fruit, satisfied and content.

In the shadows, Will pushed the button on his watch.

—

It was a relief to pop in on a Hannibal who was fucking Alana.

The familiar anger reared up in him again, burning away any sorrow, envy, or *regret* he might have been feeling. He embraced the anger. Held it tight.

He lifted a silk neck tie from its resting place on the back of a chair. It fit perfectly around Hannibal's throat, of course. Will pulled it tight from behind the other man, strangling him as Alana screamed at their mysterious attacker to stop. Hannibal thrashed and Alana tried to kick at the dark shape from where her legs were still wrapped around her lover, but her

ingrained modesty was enough to keep her from truly attacking. She grabbed at the sheets in an attempt to obscure her nudity as her lover died above her.

She sobbed and frantically backed away against the headboard as Hannibal's body fell to the bed beside her.

"Stand up, Alana," he ordered from the darkness, breathing heavily.

"…Will?" she asked, disbelief evident. "How? Did you escape?"

"Stand up, Alana, for fuck's sake." His anger was a living, breathing thing. It saturated his voice.

She stood.

He circled around her as she stayed frozen in fear and confusion. From behind, he grasped the back of her neck, her overheated skin warming the leather of his gloves, and urged her forward. "Walk," he said. "We're going to the kitchen."

"Why are you doing this, Will?" she held one arm over her breasts, her other hand over her mons. As if he cared to look at her.

"You'll see, Alana," he breathed into her ear.

They reached the kitchen and Alana stopped, but Will continued his pressure at the back of her neck. "Now the pantry," he said.

"Are you going to lock me in there?" Alana wondered. He smiled to himself. She thought him to be the Will Graham of this time. She thought he was someone who would let her live.

In the pantry, he triggered the basement hatch opening mechanism with his foot. The dark staircase was revealed, and Will nudged her forward, down into the hidden depths of the building.

Upon reaching the bottom, Will flicked the lights on with his free hand and waited as each section of the space illuminated, one by one. He urged her forward, allowing the special features of the space to come into view. He nudged her to the bank of refrigerators and freezers, pulling open a freezer drawer in which Hannibal kept the bits and pieces he didn't have a use for yet. Meticulously organized sat a series of neatly vacuum-sealed hands, feet, bones, and even some poor woman's head, her hair hygienically tucked into a clear shower cap. She bore a striking resemblance to Alana, despite the coating of frost and distortion from the bag.

After a quick glance, Alana looked away with a small cry, so Will grabbed her hair and redirected her face. "This is who your lover was, Alana. This is who you chose. This is who you fucked. How does that make you feel?"

"Please," she pleaded. "You don't have to do this, Will."

Disgusted, he used his grip on her hair to slam her head into the front of the appliance, knocking her out.

He didn't have Hannibal's surgical skills, though Hannibal had taught him some things over the years. This time, he simply strapped her to a dissection table before overdosing her on some injectable medications Hannibal kept handy in his basement. She deserved a worse death than gently drifting away into oblivion, but he wanted to tell a story here.

He loosely cataloged the contents of the basement to make sure Hannibal was still storing the leftover items from his framing of Will. Indeed, the collection of hooks, feathers, and pieces of victims had been tidily stored above a very *sterile* version of a fly tying setup, the table, magnifying glass, vise, and tools all shiny steel.

He left the light on and the hatch door open.

Upstairs, he mentally thanked his own Hannibal for all of the practice he'd gotten hauling dead bodies. It made hauling the bodies of the last few versions of Hannibal he had killed *possible* instead of *absolutely out of the question*. The man was both taller and heavier than he was. It wasn't easy. Once downstairs, into the garage, the corpse deposited in the Bentley's trunk, Will was ready for a drive.

Hours later, he greeted a very much alive Abigail. She knew immediately that he was different, not the Will she knew.

She was calm, the relief radiating off of her palpable, as she helped Will retrieve Hannibal's body from the trunk and push it over the cliff into the crashing waves. Will knew that she didn't particularly like him, had figured that out years after her death once he had untangled the true memories of her from his imagined memories of her, but her dislike for him paled next to her fear of Hannibal.

Hannibal had wielded her fear like a blade at her throat. This Abigail would not have her throat cut by Hannibal Lecter, literally or metaphorically. Unless he had written down details about her crimes, but Will didn't like Abigail enough to make sure that wasn't the case. He didn't mention the possibility to her, either.

He and Abigail drove towards Alana's house so he could secretly care for the dogs until someone remembered them. From there, Abigail would pay a visit to the FBI. He made sure she knew the story. Hannibal had turned up at the cliff house to fetch the false passport and money hidden there. From what Abigail could understand, Dr. Bloom had discovered Hannibal's secret so he had killed her. He felt the FBI was too close, and had decided to leave. Abigail was angry at him for killing her therapist, who she had cared for, and stormed outside to look at the water. He had followed, tripped on a rock, and tumbled over the edge of the cliff.

There were so many potential problems with the story, especially if Hannibal's body was found and they noticed that he had been strangled. But since the Will of this world had the best alibi possible locked up and on camera, he didn't really care. All he needed was enough cause for law enforcement to search Hannibal's house and find the basement. Abigail's

continued survival and the evidence in the basement would exonerate Will. Abigail's fate beyond her usefulness to proving Will's innocence was not his problem.

He entered Alana's house from the back. After showering every dog with affection and letting them into the back yard to take care of business, he retreated inside and closed all of the blackout curtains to minimize any signs of life from the outside. Then he refilled the food and water bowls, turned on the television news, loaded TattleCrime on Alana's laptop, and waited.

He got in some very good cuddling, a meal, and a nap before TattleCrime and then the news caught on to something being up. There were several shots of the FBI swarming Hannibal's house.

Which meant that Alana's body had been found, and her house would be visited eventually. Will made sure he stayed ready to pop away at a moment's notice, but hoped for good news before he had to.

Good news came via TattleCrime.

Abigail Hobbs Found Alive, Destroying Main Case Against Will Graham

Will's grin was triumphant. Even if the article was far from complimentary and heavily implied that he was probably still a murderer.

It really pissed Will off that no one came to check on the dogs for three days, but he did enjoy spending time with them again. He was feeling positively spoiled between his weeks in Wolf Trap and his time here, though Alana's house wasn't quite the same. No wandering fields and trees, fishing whenever he wished.

The FBI was publicly reviewing Will's case and *rumors* had leaked about Hannibal's murder basement. The man was wanted for questioning. He supposed the body hadn't been found.

On a sunny afternoon, Will heard the door knobs rattling and stood with his bag, never far from reach. "Who's there?" he whispered to the dogs. They obligingly jumped up and started barking. Good dogs.

His right hand moved to his left wrist. He pressed the button.

Chapter End Notes

We're getting there, friends! Thank you again for your very kind kudos & comments! <3

Cherry On Top

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The eleventh dimension Will visited made him laugh so hard he thought he might die.

He appeared in a living room, a very comfortable looking space. Something he might have liked to have in Wolf Trap if he'd cared enough to replace the furniture the house had come with. Big squishy pillows the dogs would love, sturdy woolen throw blankets, redwood slab side tables—it had the feel of a cabin. It might even *be* a cabin.

Hannibal stood between the worn-in leather sofa and a stacked stone fireplace, evidently examining the painting hanging above the mantel. It was a calming portrayal of a river, somewhat impressionistic, the blues, greens, grays and browns that made up the water very soothing. He wore his incredibly dorky plastic coverall, custom made because the generic kind used by painters was so unfashionable or whatever. Underneath, a garish three-piece suit was visible.

Evidently, Will's sudden appearance had been completely silent. When he said "nice painting" at normal speaking volume Hannibal startled badly, spun towards him, tripped on a rug, and

Fell

Backwards

Onto a set of fireplace tools.

For reasons unknown, the poker had been stored incorrectly, pointy-end up.

The force of Hannibal's fall and his body weight allowed that damned poker to pierce right through his plastic murder onesie and the suit coat, vest, and shirt beneath, and into the delicate skin. Even better, the rack collapsed under the sudden assault, allowing the poker's entire length to penetrate through Hannibal's abdomen.

Hannibal lay there, impaled, with an extremely uncharacteristic look of shock on his face. Blood leaked from around the poker but stayed primarily inside the plastic suit. Overall, it was the most tidy *bloody* end he could imagine. And he couldn't take it.

He laughed.

And laughed.

And laughed.

Hannibal looked extremely offended.

“I…didn’t expect…you home so early,” Hannibal rasped. Will raised one eyebrow. *I suppose that might explain why I like the furniture,* he thought.

“Were you here to kill me?” he asked, smiling broadly, laughter still in his voice.

“You…know…about me,” Hannibal said. “Couldn’t…take the risk.” Hannibal began to cough up blood.

“Oh Hannibal,” Will said. “I will treasure this memory forever. You here to kill this world’s Will Graham, me appearing, you *impaling yourself*,” he chuckled. “This is absolute gold. Thank you. I haven’t laughed so much in a while.”

Hannibal was watching him with a puzzled frown. He evidently hadn’t noticed that he wasn’t quite the same as the Will Graham he knew.

“Wait, where are the dogs?” he wondered.

“Kitchen,” Hannibal managed before choking on blood again.

“Oh, good. You didn’t hurt them did you?” Will asked, sternly.

That earned him another look. An *of course not* sort of look. Will nodded, satisfied.

“Well then,” he said as he took a seat on the sofa. It was incredibly comfortable, like every part of him was being gently cradled. “Guess I’ll keep you company while you check out.” He chuckled again, unable to wipe the smile off of his face.

—

In the next universe, he was slightly less amused.

Years ago, Will had convinced Hannibal to tell him about Beverly’s death, but the man’s explanation had been brief and short on details. Hannibal hadn’t wanted to kill her and hadn’t liked doing it. It wasn’t something he could revisit with relish. Except the display. He was very self-congratulatory about his “tribute” to her.

When Will appeared in a windowless room behind a Hannibal ready to spring at a wide-eyed Beverly who was aiming her firearm, he guessed in a split-second what might be happening. Just as Hannibal began to move, Will wrapped his arms around the other man’s arms and midsection, slowing the other man down and hopefully giving Bev a chance to shoot him.

He might also find himself shot, but probably not fatally.

“Shoot him, Bev!” Will encouraged.

She did. Center mass, near where his arms were wrapped. She didn’t get Will badly - just a graze, and thankfully the bullets didn’t exit Hannibal’s body into Will’s.

“Perfect, well done,” he complimented, glancing up at her. She looked shocked.

Will lowered the severely injured Hannibal to the floor of the basement, patting him down and confiscating the blades from all of the places he liked to stash them. He was feeling magnanimous after the comedy of the *impalement incident* and *that* Hannibal's slow and painful death. He didn't even care if this Hannibal ended up surviving. It didn't look likely, but if the man was anything, he was a stubborn bastard, so who knew. It would be enough for him to be locked away, probably, if he threatened Jack with death if the bulldog of a man dared to put Will in Hannibal's path again.

"Will? What the fuck?"

"Oh, don't worry. The Will you know is still locked up, probably. Assuming he is in the BSHCI?" She stared. "He'd better not be in there for long," he said darkly as he tossed the handful of blades onto a table a few yards away. "Call Jack and an ambulance." She hesitated, but retreated upstairs, presumably to regain her cell signal.

"Who are you?" Hannibal asked through gritted teeth from his position on the concrete.

"Who am I?" Will hummed, pondering. He pulled a bandage from his cargo pocket and wrapped his arm where the bullet had grazed it. He would clean it later. "I *feel* like an avenging angel sometimes," he admitted.

"He avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries," Hannibal said softly.

"He repays those who hate him," Will continued the verse.

"Never," Hannibal said, shaking his head. "I have never hated Will."

"I know, Hannibal," Will said. "You sure know how to push every button we have, though," he continued with a soft smile. "Tell me."

"You know," Hannibal breathed.

"Yes, I know. Tell me."

"I wanted an equal," he said with a sigh.

"You wanted to create him in your image."

"No," Hannibal insisted weakly.

"Yes. But Hannibal, did you ever consider that perhaps you'd have been better off recreating yourself in his image? Pretty sure most would agree with me that a mildly-crazy well-educated dog-obsessed man with perma-scruff and bad aftershave is preferable to *any* sort of cannibalistic serial killer, no matter how good they look, how charming they are, or how sexy they smell." Hannibal closed his eyes.

The men coexisted in silence until Beverly returned. Hannibal might have just fallen unconscious, actually. Will wasn't too bothered either way.

Beverly was understandably ruffled and prickly when she returned. “Cavalry’s coming. Don’t you dare go anywhere,” she insisted, pointing at Will and glaring. She was still clearly confused, but trying not to let it get in her way.

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” he said, grinning. Outing himself as a dimension traveler was getting to be a habit.

He bent down and felt for Hannibal’s pulse. There, but faint. Not dead yet. Too bad. He might actually survive it.

Before too long, after Will stood there for several awkward moments with the confused Beverly, Hannibal was transported up the stairs and out into an ambulance, strapped securely to a stretcher and escorted by armed guards. He hadn’t said anything since Will’s mini-lecture.

“Will is still behind bars, I just got confirmation, so who the hell are you?” Jack boomed as he reached the bottom of the staircase and saw Will.

“We could pretend that I’m Will’s uncle or cousin or something if it’d make you feel better,” Will offered.

“I repeat. Who. The. Hell. Are. You?” Jack said through gritted teeth. Will thought the man should be paying more attention to the murder basement he’d stumbled into. The FBI techs and agents who had filed in behind Jack had briefly noted Will with confusion and even some fear, but they were appropriately horrified by the butchering equipment and human remains.

Brian, Jimmy, and Bev had formed a half-circle behind Jack. Seeing Brian and Jimmy’s dawning realization and horror was quite something. Seeing them realize that *Will was right about Hannibal* and then understanding the implication, that *Will might be innocent* was extremely gratifying.

“I’m Will,” Will shrugged. “From several years in the future, slightly different universe. Where I’m from, Lecter killed Bev tonight. Couldn’t let that stand if I could help it.”

“Right,” Jack said, his disbelief so similar to that of the last Jack he confided in that he chuckled. Jack glared.

“You don’t need to believe me,” Will said. “All you need to do is make sure Hannibal is dead or behind bars and your Will Graham is released from that hellhole as soon as possible. Once I’m assured of those two things, I’m happy to move on.”

“You’re a witness,” Jack said with his stern-father voice.

“As if you need a witness when you have this basement,” Will said, rolling his eyes. “By the way, Abigail Hobbs is alive. Unless that’s different here, I suppose. Lecter owns a house out in the Calvert Cliffs area where she was staying back in my world. He helped her fake her death in exchange for the *materials* needed to frame Will. For some reason,” he glared at Jack, “she was terrified that she would be locked up as a murderer. It’s like you’ve never heard of captor bonding, Jack, for fuck’s sake. Even if she actually slaughtered those girls -

which she didn’t - you’ll never get a conviction. No evidence, and all the reason in the world to do what she was told. Oh sorry, am I rambling?” he bared his teeth. It wasn’t that he particularly cared about Abigail, but Jack’s stupidity about the situation had been bothering him for *years*. It was kind of nice to let some of it out.

Killing Jack a few times during his adventure had been therapeutic in its own way, but forcing Jack to listen to him as he described the ways in which the other man was an idiot was in some ways even more satisfying.

In truth, he *liked* Jack. Sometimes that was worse than hating someone.

“Stay,” Jack demanded. “Katz, stay with him. Price, Zeller, with me.” He stalked away, finally turning his attention to the dungeon of horrors.

He shook his head. *Dungeon of horrors* was unkind. Hannibal kept the place neat and tidy like every other corner of his life. It was more like a *private artisan butchery.* He turned back to Beverly with a smile.

Her survival was a cherry on top of an already enjoyable couple of days.

Chapter End Notes

Hello lovely readers!

I'm a bit torn between continuing with Will's murder spree and moving on to the Moment After Which Everything is Different (aka, the path to happier times). There will be at least one more chapter of wholesome Hannibal-murdering either way, but let me know what you all think. Ready to move on, yea or nay?
<3 <3 <3

Interlude: Scars are proof that you survived

Chapter Summary

A look back at what the boys got up to after Hannibal's impalement.

Chapter Notes

If smut isn't your thing, you can skip the second half of this chapter without missing anything terribly important. CW: Selfcest.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the kitchen, the dogs began to bark excitedly. No growling. They weren't reacting to someone unfriendly. He heard the *snick* and *whoosh* of a door opening, and the frantic scrabbling of doggy toenails *click-clacking* against the hard flooring. They were such familiar sounds that the tenseness in Will's jaw relaxed, his anxiety about the upcoming meeting trickling away into a low hum.

"What are you all doing in here? Who shut you in?" he heard through the door, the voice affectionate and amused. The voice was Will's, always slightly higher when coming from another of his selves, absent the vibrations in his head. This was a Will who cared enough about his existence to customize his living situation to his true preferences, and who had chosen the heavenly worn leather sofa into which Will was practically entombed. He wondered what else was different about this Will.

Regardless, the local Will was about to discover an older version of himself calmly waiting for a bleeding-out Hannibal to finally die. "Out you go," the voice said. "Run and play." The dog sounds faded as they accepted the invitation to go outside.

A door behind him opened, the smoothly turning knob, lack of friction against the frame, and silent hinges a testament to the home's good repair. This version of himself really had his shit together. It made him feel a little bit self-conscious.

"Hello?" he heard from behind. "Hannibal? Oh fuck." Steady footsteps brought the new Will into view. He wore a well-tailored suit, the fabric draping on his body with the naturalness of wool, black with fine gray pinstripes. Black leather oxfords cradled his feet. This version of him was a *Mr. Graham*, Will thought, not Will the Scruffy Lecturer or Will the Scruffy but Respectable Agent-in-Training. This man might even be a Dr. Graham.

He knelt next to Hannibal, obviously uncaring of the blood that had leaked out of the plastic suit, and too distracted to notice the presence of another uninvited guest. “What are you *wearing*?” Graham asked, incredulously, eying Hannibal’s bizarre vinyl coverall. “Oh for the love of…this is how you avoid leaving evidence.” He sighed. “You’re here to, what, plant evidence? Kill me?” A minute expression flickering across Hannibal’s face gave him away. “You came here to kill me, and what, had a mishap with this fire poker? How close are you to death?” he wondered.

Hannibal coughed, expelling some blood. “Close,” he rasped.

“Do you want an ambulance? I’d be happy to call one.”

Hannibal shook his head. “No use.”

“I suppose my living room is nicer than an ambulance or hospital for your last moments,” Will observed. Hannibal stared.

He sighed, then turned away from Hannibal to the sofa. The brief flash of surprise on his face when he finally noticed Will was quickly masked. It was impressive.

“This sofa is amazing,” Will offered. “Had no idea there were sofas this comfortable.”

The other Will looked concerned. “I should call my neurologist,” he said to himself. “Hopefully this is just a relapse and not a new problem.”

Will shook his head. “You’re not relapsing. I’m not a hallucination,” he assured.

“Best not engage with hallucinations,” the other Will stated, staring over Will’s head.

Hannibal drew their attention back to himself with choking cough. “He’s real,” he rasped.

Both versions of Will rolled their eyes.

“No mind games, Lecter.”

“I’m a dimension traveler,” Will offered.

The other regarded him coldly, but a moment later collapsed onto the sofa right next to Will, their sides touching. “You feel real enough,” the other admitted begrudgingly. “Why are you here, then? What’s your deal?”

“I didn’t shoot for this universe specifically,” he said. “I can’t choose. I’ve been trying to save as many of us from that guy,” he gestured at Hannibal with a tilt of his head, “as possible. What’s your deal? You’re not a lowly lecturer like I was,” he observed.

Graham gave him a Look. “Nothing lowly about teaching,” he said. “We don’t have agents without professors to train them. You’re right, though, I’m not a lecturer.”

“You’re some kind of director, aren’t you?” Will said with a sigh. “That suit’s too nice for anything but.”

Graham nodded, still sitting warm against Will's side. "Special Agent-in-Charge at BAU," he offered. "Not a director."

"Huh. Jack Crawford not exist here?"

Graham smirked. "That one," he said, gesturing to Hannibal, "Killed him a few years ago."

"You know about Hannibal, and haven't turned him in?" Will wondered.

Graham simply looked at him, unamused. "I'm ashamed to admit that I've only known for a day, not long enough to gather enough evidence to bring him in. I imagine my realization is what prompted Hannibal's visit this evening. Is the fire poker through his gut your doing, by the way?"

Will chuckled. "No, actually. I just startled him. He tripped and fell on it. I'm serious," he said at Graham's look. Graham was *good* at *Looks*. "Fucking hysterical, isn't it? I thought I was going to pass out from laughing." He smiled at the memory.

"Hmm," Graham acknowledged. "Hannibal?" he asked. "You still alive?"

No response.

Graham extracted himself from the sofa's clutches, dropping forward onto his hands and knees so he could crawl a few paces to where Hannibal lay. He checked the man's pulse.

"Still there," Graham said. "But he's unconscious now so he won't mind me calling an ambulance. I would really rather he die elsewhere," he said with a put-upon sigh. "I'm too tired to have a team crawling around my house for no good reason. You can relax in my room while they're here," he offered to Will.

Will watched as he pulled a cell phone out of his pocket and called 9-1-1.

—

Once Hannibal was gone in an ambulance and the police had finished questioning Graham, Will emerged from the bedroom to find that the other man had finished locking up and settling the dogs on their pillows.

Will was startled to realize that he didn't recognize a single one of the dogs. He supposed that it made sense, though. Wherever this house was, it must not be in Wolf Trap, on whose roads he had found most of his pack. With a pang, he hoped that the dogs he hadn't rescued in this dimension had found good homes.

These looked like good dogs too, of course. Five of them, all mixed breeds. They watched him with curiosity, tongues lolling from their mouths, happy and relaxed.

Graham was finishing up the cleaning of Hannibal's blood from the fireplace hearth and the floor in front of it. He had discarded his suit jacket at some point and rolled the cuffs of his light blue button-down up to his elbows, revealing familiar, strong forearms. The man's curls

weren't quite as long as his own, but a few strands tumbled onto his forehead as he concentrated on cleaning.

Finally, he sat back on his knees and did some quick stretching to compensate for the bent-over posture that had been necessary to clean. He looked at Will. "You want to stay the night?" he asked. "Or are you moving on already?"

"I'd like to stay if you don't mind," Will said. "I never know where I'll end up or what time of day it will be. I'm always grateful for a safe place to sleep."

Graham nodded. "You'll be in with me then," he said. "I don't have a guest bed, and while this sofa feels great to sit on, believe me when I say you won't like the aches and pains you'll wake up with after a night on it."

—

Will stripped out of his socks, pants, and shirt, left only in black boxer-briefs. He flipped the duvet and sheet back and climbed onto the bed, relaxing with his back against the headboard.

Graham grumbled from the other side of the bed about the blood stains on his suit pants. "I should sue his estate for a new suit," he joked darkly.

Will smiled. "You could get one of Hannibal's suits re-tailored," he suggested. "You could rock one of his less offensive plaids."

Graham laughed. "Oh hell no," he said. "Last thing I need is Freddie Lounds writing about me dressing like an about-to-be-outed notorious serial killer. She already thinks I kill people in my free time."

"You have a point," Will allowed, thinking about how a lot of his own free time did involve killing people. He needed better hobbies. "What do you do in your free time?"

Graham looked at him, then away, then back at him. A double-take. He stripped off the last of his clothes save for his shorts and climbed into bed. "Real question," he said while studying Will, "is what the hell happened to you? I noticed the scars on your face, but that's the least of them, isn't it?"

Will hummed, watching Graham stretch his arm towards his belly, nodding at him his permission to touch. "Hannibal happened to me," he admitted as his other self's calloused fingers ran the length of his ugliest scar. "That one was a punishment for working with Jack, trying to find proof of his guilt. And for not running away with him, I guess." Graham's eyes flicked up to his, then back down. His touch felt good. The scar tissue wasn't sensitive, but the skin around it was. It felt more sensitive than usual from the contrast.

"And this?" he asked, touching Will's shoulder.

Will scooted lower in the bed until he was lying next to Graham. Graham's hand moved with him, caressing the joint with gentleness. "Jack shot me," he said with a chuckle. Graham looked at him sharply. "It wasn't funny at the time. I had Hannibal at gunpoint. Jack thought

he was an innocent psychiatrist, and they were buddies besides. Jack had to save him from me. And a bit later, one of Hannibal's friends shot me when I pulled a knife on him."

Graham smiled with half of his mouth, acknowledging that Will thought the situation was funny in hindsight but clearly not approving. "This?" he asked, brushing his fingers against the scar at his forehead.

Will smiled. "Hannibal decided he needed to eat my brain, started sawing open my skull. He got interrupted."

Graham frowned deeply. "Here?" he asked, touching a long stripe on the back of his forearm.

"Dragged Hannibal off a cliff, half hoping we would die, but we both survived it somehow."

The muscles in Graham's jaw tensed, then relaxed. He cupped Will's jaw in his hand, touching the scar on his cheek with his thumb. "This?"

"*That* one was Francis Dolarhyde, has he turned up here? Tooth Fairy. Great Red Dragon?"

"I'll remember the name," Graham said with a shake of his head. "In case he does. Jesus Christ, Lecter really put you through the ringer."

"And yet," Will said. At Graham's look, he continued. "And yet, I loved him. After we survived the cliff, I thought it must be a sign from the universe that running off with him really was what I was supposed to do." Graham watched him intently. "Left my wife, step-son, and dogs behind, hoped they would think me dead, and we left the country to live under assumed names. It was good, sometimes. Really good," he allowed.

"What changed?" Graham asked, voice soft. Non-judgmental. The relief Will felt at being able to be completely honest with someone, even if that someone was a version of *himself* was immense.

Will chuckled. "He cheated on me, fucking bastard, and even sent her to kill me. I patched her up, sent her on her way, and killed him instead."

Graham's bare-teeth smile showed approval. His hand was still at Will's jaw, rubbing circles with his thumb over Will's scarred cheek. "And the dimension traveling?"

"Killing him once wasn't enough," he ground out. "I don't know how long it will take me to be satisfied. It's been nice to help other versions of us, too."

Graham nodded in understanding, then leaned towards him, thumbing his bottom lip. His hand was pleasantly warm on Will's skin. The two men's eyes met, identical blues, like looking into a mirror almost. Will was just a little older, a little more run down. His scruff wasn't as neatly kept as Graham's, and his skin was a little more damaged from the extra years, even without the scars.

In the essentials, though, they were the same. Eyebrows, nose, lips. The arch of their necks, the curve of their shoulders, the squareness of their jaws.

The cadence of their breathing matched, even as it sped and deepened. Graham's eyelids fluttered in arousal just like Will's eyelids did, and when they each bit their own bottom lip, only a moment separated their actions.

Graham had been so thoughtful all evening. He'd handled Will exactly right, because he knew himself and what he needed. They both knew what they needed next.

They met in the middle, lips meeting identical lips, a series of soft presses that deepened into hungrier ones. Will's hand found Graham's flank, the soft skin stretched over taut muscle satisfying under his palm and fingers.

Graham's hand still cradled the sharp jaw they shared. He angled Will's head, then licked into his hot mouth with need, drawing the barest hint of a whimper.

Will pulled himself forward across the sheet, desperate for more contact. The men tangled their legs together, the thick muscles in their thighs flexing, tensing with the need to hold back for now.

"I wish I could keep my hair as long as yours," Graham whispered as he ran his fingers through Will's lush curls, brushing a few strands behind Will's ear so he could suck on the lobe.

"Fuck," Will breathed, the sensation exquisite.

Graham nuzzled into the space just behind Will's ear, inhaling deeply. He licked and sucked at the delicate skin, pleased when Will began to suck and bite at his neck in turn. "Yes," he encouraged, voice rough. "Please."

Graham's hands felt like safety as they roamed the skin along his sides and back. Will lapped at his pulse point until the other man pulled away, down, restricting his access. He was about to protest when Graham's mouth surrounded his nipple, sucking on the nub and pulling a gasp from him. He did the same to the other side, not complaining when Will's grasp on his shoulder tightened more than could be comfortable.

Graham softly kissed Will's old bullet wounds, his hand gently caressing the edges where the mottled scar tissue transitioned to healthy skin. There were no signs of disgust coming from him, only tenderness and care.

Will's breath shook as Graham traveled further down his body, kissing along his chest and abdomen until he reached the ugliest part of Will. An ugly scar for an ugly memory. And yet, Graham kissed and caressed it just as tenderly as he had the bullet wounds. "You don't have to do that," he said to Graham with some effort. "It's an ugly scar."

"It's proof that you survived something terrible," he disagreed, voice soothing. "That isn't ugly."

Will's breath hitched. "Okay," he whispered, refusing to let himself *cry* of all things. Hannibal had never wanted to focus any attention on it, considering it an unwanted reminder

of mistakes made. He flexed his fingers in Graham's hair and took several deep breaths until he felt a little steadier. "Okay," he repeated.

As Graham's lips traveled down his belly, his hands grasped the waistband of his boxer briefs and pulled them down, Will assisting by lifting his lower body long enough for the shorts to be pulled off his legs and tossed across the room.

Graham returned to kissing his belly, then his pelvis, his warm hands holding Will's hips still as he tongued at the head of Will's half-hard cock. Under Graham's attentive mouth, it was soon fully hard. Watching Graham with his cock in his mouth was incredibly weird and incredibly hot, like watching himself, his own lips stretched around his girth. *"Fuck,"* he hissed, weaving his fingers into Graham's wavy hair. Their eyes met. "Can I?" he asked, and the way Graham's gaze darkened, the way his eyes smiled, left him with his answer.

His thrusts were shallow at first, then deeper, fucking up into Graham's hot mouth. Graham gagged, spit leaking down his chin, as Will fucked his throat, enjoying the convulsing tight tunnel around his cock. It felt obscene and perfect. When he felt too close to coming, he pulled Graham's head up and off by his hair and waited for the other man to catch his breath and wipe the spit from his chin with the back of one hand.

The man watched him darkly as he crawled up Will's body, attacking his mouth passionately and grinding his own cock into Will's thigh.

"Fuck me," Will begged. "Please, I need…"

"You don't have to beg, darling. I'll fuck you as long as you want," he assured. "I'm clean, do we need a condom?"

"No," Will breathed. "Clean." He bent his knees, legs spread, feet planted on the bed, ready.

Graham looked extremely pleased as he stripped off his shorts, then leaned towards the night stand, snatching a bottle of lubricant before relaxing onto his side next to Will. He slicked up his hand, warming the lube, then found Will's opening, rubbing it softly and then with firmer pressure.

"It's only been about a month for me," Will said. "You don't have to be careful."

"Hmm," Graham acknowledged, pressing two fingers inside and sliding them in and out of Will's body. When he grazed Will's prostate, the other man released a pleased grunt.

"Fuck me already," he rasped.

Obligingly, Graham rose and positioned himself between Will's legs. He lined up the head of his cock with Will's pucker, slathered a bit more lube on his cock, then slowly slid in. "*Yes*," Will hissed. "Please, move, I need to feel you."

He did move, pulling out and sliding back in until the glide was smooth, then pulled out and snapped his hips forward, fucking into the other man and making him whimper. "Fuck yes," Will groaned. "Harder."

Graham paused a moment to move Will’s legs to his shoulders, then fulfilled Will’s request, fucking hard into him, gripping his hips to hold them steady, hammering Will’s prostate with his hard, leaking dick. “You feel so fucking good,” Graham praised. “I wish I could fuck you like this forever. You’re perfect.”

Will couldn’t help but smile, even as the stimulation to his prostate drove him closer to coming. He rubbed circles on his own nipples and squeezed his cock. “Faster,” he gasped. Graham gasped with him, tightening his hold on his hips and fucking into Will enthusiastically. “Yes, yes, that’s it.”

With a long moan, Will came all over his own stomach and chest, shaky with satisfaction. Graham fucked into him twice more before holding Will’s hips against his as he came, filling Will’s ass with his cum.

He pulled out slowly, catching a dribble of cum leaking from Will’s ass and pushing it back inside. Smirking, he leaned over to the nightstand, opened the top drawer, and pulled out a silicone plug. He held it up, raising an eyebrow at Will.

Will nodded, trying not to laugh and push more cum out unintentionally. Graham pushed another trail of cum back inside and followed it up with the plug. He patted it, making Will moan again, then collapsed next to his other self.

The men lay on their sides, watching each other, smirking. “Let’s do that again before I leave,” Will suggested.

“As many times as we can manage,” Graham agreed.

That decided, Will rolled over and Graham molded himself to his back, no need to discuss taking the nap they both knew they wanted.

Graham’s hand lay gently across Will’s belly scar. Will’s near-identical hand rested on top.

Will exhaled deeply, happy and sated.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the feedback last time! We'll be moving on to happier times fairly soon. <3

Not Quite Right

Chapter Notes

Again, feel free to skip the second half if you don't like...
CW: werewolf (human form) fucking & knotting (no a/b/o)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Stay,” Jack demanded. “Katz, stay with him. Price, Zeller, with me.”

Will turned back to Beverly with a smile.

“So. DJ. What are you really doing here?”

“DJ?” Will wondered.

“Dimension Jumper. Answer my question.”

Will shrugged. “I don’t choose where or when I find myself, but I recognized what was happening and didn’t want you to die this time. I was rather fond of you, and inadvertently sending you to your death is one of my greatest regrets.”

“Rather fond, huh? Are you intentionally understating it or were we not fucking in your universe?”

That startled a loud laugh out of Will. “No, um. You’re lovely, Bev, and I was rather fond of you, but I have never personally been involved with any Bev I’ve met. Huh. Did he manage to make a move? Or did you pursue him?”

Bev’s smile turned catlike. “I pursued him, obviously. That boy doesn’t even know what he wants, never mind how to get it.”

Will chuckled, knowing how true that was. “This situation must have been pretty bad for you, then. Did you believe he was the killer?”

Bev’s face scrunched up in some mixture of disgust and regret. “Didn’t know what to think,” she admitted. “I wasn’t allowed to be on forensics for the case because of our relationship, and not processing the evidence with my own hands got to me. If I’m not doing it, I don’t know it’s correct. I do trust Jack and the team, but…”

“If you’re involved, were you an alibi for any of the crimes?”

“Yeah, I was,” she agreed. “The rest of the team said he must have drugged me and gone off to do things while I was out, because of the strength of the evidence. It’s been fucking

infuriating."

"You can hold this over their heads for quite a while," he said, gesturing to the basement and above their heads. "Sexist assholes. As if the woman on the team is too helpless to realize when she'd been drugged, so all of the big smart men have to tell her what *really* happened."

"THANK YOU," she yelled, drawing stares. She lowered her voice slightly to continue, "I told them I knew what being drugged felt like, but they said I was emotionally compromised."

"Poor helpless woman, so emotionally compromised by her relationship that she would never be able to think logically about a situation and needs the big smart men to protect her," Will mocked. "You should be Special Agent-in-Charge, Bev. You'd be great at it and you could recruit some more women to the team. Every team is better with more women."

Bev watched him, head tilted. "My Will does consider himself a feminist, but he's not nearly as vocal about it."

"Ah," Will said, a little bit embarrassed. "It's a big thing in a few years, outing people for mistreatment of women, especially in workplaces. I did maybe spend too much time arguing with assholes online. I was bored," he defended himself when she looked at him look he was an idiot. "You'll see," he insisted. "Probably. Never know with the different universes, I guess, but I haven't jumped enough times to end up anywhere extremely different."

"Everywhere is basically the same?" she asked, sounding disappointed.

"The scientists who gave me the ability to jump theorized that universes that are close together are similar. You don't have life-as-we-know-it in one, and right next to it a world where humans live alongside dinosaurs. I think I would need to jump many times to find anything too weird, and I'm kind of afraid to go that far."

"Because you don't want to meet dinosaurs? C'mon, that'd be awesome."

"Because I'm not sure what I would do if I met a Hannibal who didn't deserve to die."

She paused. "Right, okay. If you met one who didn't deserve it…you wouldn't let him die," leaving the *obviously* unvoiced.

"Yeah, exactly. I wouldn't kill him, er, let him die I mean. And then what?" Their conversation drifted into thoughtful silence on his end, slightly concerned silence on hers.

Will stayed around with Bev only long enough for Jack to promise that their Will would be released as soon as possible. He told them they should bring him to his dogs ASAP because he probably wouldn't care to see any of them except maybe Bev.

They told him that Will didn't have dogs. He had *cats*. TEN cats.

He told them to bring Will to his *cats* ASAP in that case, and decided that he should move on. He didn't mind cats, but Will Graham the Cat Collector seemed like a trip he wasn't quite ready for.

—

The next several universes, it felt like he was *stuck* somehow. He kept appearing in Hannibal's office, behind the desk. Over and over and over again, only weeks or months apart. It was concerning. The watch was one-of-a-kind and he'd had absolutely no guarantee that it would work *once* never mind the number of times he had used it. Would he get stuck in a universe? And if so, where?

Something wasn't quite right, anyway, beyond fearing that the watch was malfunctioning.

Killing Hannibal wasn't as rewarding as it had once been.

At the beginning of his journey, he had treasured the sense of righteous vindication gained from each dead Hannibal. Later, he had appreciated the sense of *satisfaction* and the knowledge that one of his other selves had been made safer through his actions. His mood had taken a turn for the better since his pseudo-therapy with Graham, though, and murdering Hannibal just didn't seem as important anymore.

What a problem to have.

He simply shot Hannibal and his patients in most of the universes in which he had appeared behind Hannibal's desk. He couldn't think of what else he should do.

He did gratefully take his time with a Freddie Lounds he discovered seated next to Hannibal on the fussy blue sofa he had always feared contaminating with dog hair. He slowly strangled her from behind as Hannibal watched on in fascination, eventually assisting by holding her arms and legs still as Will leisurely choked the life out of her. He couldn't let *that* particular opportunity pass him by.

It reminded him of times with his own Hannibal, especially the heat in the other man's eyes as he saw what Will was capable of.

He thought about slitting that Hannibal's throat with one of several "pencil sharpener" scalpels he had pocketed when appearing next to Hannibal's desk. The warmth of Hannibal's blood radiating through his gloves, warming his hands, would feel nice.

He didn't do it.

The combination of recent dissatisfaction in his killings and the nostalgia inspired by the way that Hannibal looked at him was probably why he found himself face-down over the desk with his ass in the air, Hannibal's tongue around and inside his opening, eating him out with more enthusiasm than Will had experienced from Hannibal in years.

"F-f-fuck," Will gasped, accidentally knocking several things off of the desk as he desperately clawed at the surface, attempting to find something he could hold onto. He always somehow forgot how *exquisite* it felt to have a hot, wet, slightly textured tongue lapping at and probing the sensitive skin of his hole. He moaned, long and loud, fingernails gouging the finish of the desk top.

“Stop, Hannibal, gonna come. Need your cock.”

“Of course, Will,” a slightly out-of-breath Hannibal agreed. Will heard the rustle of clothes and the quiet slide of a zip, then the impolite sound of the other man spitting a few times before he felt a pressure at his opening. His opening was already wet with spit and loose enough from Hannibal’s tongue, and the other man pushed inside him without further preparation.

“*Yes,*” Will hissed, taking the thick cock inside himself. “You feel so good,” he managed. “So full.”

Hannibal breathed heavily behind him, his grip on Will’s hips slightly shaky.

“Do you do this with your Will?” he asked, breathy, shifting backwards to take the full length inside.

Hannibal hissed. “Not yet, but I have hopes.” He pulled out and worked himself back in, moving his hips forward and pulling Will back onto his cock simultaneously.

“Just don’t, for the love of god, frame him for murder,” Will ground out. “Worst fucking thing you could possibly do. Faster,” he insisted. The other man’s hips sped up, each motion just grazing the sweet spot inside of him.

“It…had…crossed my mind,” Hannibal admitted, haltingly.

“Don’t,” Will repeated. “Fucking eat his ass the way you just did mine and get him treated for encephalitis if that happens here,” he spoke through teeth clenched from overwhelming sensation. “If you mistreat him I’ll come back and kill you,” he lied. “*Harder*, Hannibal, *fuck*.”

It was necessary for their conversation to cease at that point, Hannibal drilling into Will’s ass hard and fast, quite probably leaving bruises on his hips from the strength of his grip.

Will’s speech was reduced to whimpers and pleas, Hannibal’s to grunts and rumbling growls.

Which, through the haze of pleasure, Will thought was a little weird. The rumbling growls.

It was also weird when Hannibal, holding Will’s hips tight against his own to pump Will full of cum, seemed to be *expanding inside of him*, the odd pressure strangely arousing, ultimately resulting in him shooting cum all over the side of Hannibal’s desk with a shout of pleasure.

Hannibal continued to hold Will’s hips steady, barely pulling out and pushing back in, like micro-thrusts, growling and rumbling all the while.

“Huh,” Will said, trying to catch his breath. “You’re…uh, some genetic variation of a human?” Sounded better in his head than *mutant*.

“No…a werewolf,” Hannibal growled, still too distracted by barely shifting Will on his knot for a real conversation.

“Does Will know?”

“*No*,” he rumbled.

“Huh,” Will said. “Well, you should maybe tell him before you fuck him, if you always come like this. Or maybe not,” he shrugged. “Anyway, he’ll probably understand your kills when he realizes your natural prey is humans.”

Hannibal grunted, and Will felt another rushing sensation inside his ass. He was going to be absolutely full of cum at this rate.

“You, uh, don’t have some magical ability to get me pregnant, do you?” Will asked, suddenly nervous.

“No,” Hannibal managed.

“Thank fuck,” Will sighed. The constant and growing pressure against his prostate from Hannibal’s big cock and the large quantity of cum was making him hard again, something he hadn’t experienced since he was a much younger man. “*Fuck*,” he repeated. Hannibal reached around him without prompting to begin pumping his again-hard cock, Will nearly crying at the combination of stimulation outside and in. And then he felt Hannibal’s cock deflate somewhat, just the bulge. It was still hard, and Hannibal began fucking him again.

Streams of cum gushed out of Will’s ass as Hannibal pumped in and out of him. He felt it running down both of his legs and dripping from his balls.

“Oh fuck, Hannibal, you have got to fuck your Will ASAP, he’ll be addicted to your cock.”

In fact, Will was halfway-considering staying and insinuating himself so he could fuck this Werewolf Hannibal frequently.

Something made him feel like he needed to move on, though. There was something else he needed to do.

For the moment, however, he would thoroughly enjoy being fucked.

Chapter End Notes

Werewolf!Hannibal sexing wasn't in my outline, but who am I to argue. lol

In Over His Head

Chapter Summary

This is it: the moment after which everything is different.

Chapter Notes

I've been sitting on this chapter for too long already, so I've decided not to wait to post it. :D

From chapter one:
"I had a gift for you, you know. Time and teacups, as you like to say. A clever scientist in the city was happy to devote his team to a special project once I showed him the amount of funding I could offer. I thought we could find your sister. Make a new life where we could raise her. Where we weren't wanted men."

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will sighed in relief when his next jump landed him in a field in the middle of the night instead of Hannibal's office again.

Hannibal was several dozen yards away wearing his ridiculous vinyl jumpsuit, carrying a stag head.

Will wanted to laugh. Instead, he waited until Hannibal had placed the head and swiveled to return to the car for his victim. Before he had taken two strides, Will shot the man several times, not immediately fatal, but severe enough that Hannibal would be weak enough in a few minutes for Will to manhandle him into place.

Will painted a pretty picture for law enforcement, the aesthetically beautiful Hannibal draped artistically over the stag head as Cassie would have been, naked and, for the moment, alive. He used a sharpie from his bag to draw on Hannibal's furry chest a facsimile of a "Hello, my name is" sticker, filling in the name field with "Chesapeake Ripper."

He snorted, amused with himself. *What even is my life,* he wondered.

He could hear Cassie banging around in the trunk of the car, but imagined that she would be fine until the morning, when someone found Hannibal's body. He didn't really care about her fate, anyway. If Hannibal had chosen her, she must have been quite rude.

The only people Will cared about were himself and his other selves. His sense of justice was twisted, and it had been many years since he considered himself a good person. It would take something extraordinary for him to change.

—

Will was pleasantly surprised when his next jump took him into a forest instead of leaving him in the field several more times.

He stood at the edge of a clearing that held a cabin, a weak swirl of smoke coming from the chimney. Each of his steady breaths hovered before him like fog. Surveying his surroundings, Will noted that there were trees in every direction, as far as he could see. Only a few narrow paths cut through the underbrush to reach the cabin.

He had a bad feeling about this.

A weary-looking man wearing an olive drab green uniform was stepping outside carrying a tiny body, dead or unconscious.

Oh no.

Will silently stalked the man as he carried the child to the rear of the cabin where a hunter's processing station stood. Blood stained the floor of the open-walled hut. On a long table lay a jumble of blades.

No, absolutely not. He had seen enough.

Will drew his gun, crept as close to the man as he could, and took aim. The shot rang out, startlingly loud in the quiet forest. The man's head partially disintegrated, blood and brain matter showering his surroundings. Will ran forward to rescue the child from the dead man's arms as he began to fall.

The child, barely more than a baby, had woken. Set in a bloody and dirt-smudged face, huge blue eyes met his, confused and afraid. The skin under her nose was rubbed raw, her breathing sounded raspy, and her tiny rosebud lips were cracked and dry. She whimpered.

"Shh," he said. "You're okay." He was lying. She was ill. She might not even understand English, but if she was who he thought she was, he knew her brother had learned the language relatively early in life.

The shot had attracted the attention of three other men. The feelings they exuded were not what he might have expected: no anger, righteousness, or fear came from them.

They eyed their fallen comrade with hunger, and they drew their knives as they advanced on Will, their ammunition likely spent long ago. They were starving and not thinking clearly. They believed a miraculous feast had fallen into their laps when all they had previously expected were the limited flesh and bones of one tiny creature. *No wonder they intended to make her into soup,* Will thought. *She's more bones than anything else.*

Holding the little girl against his chest, attempting to muffle her small ears, he opened fire on the delirious men, killing them quickly and mercifully, even if they did not deserve his mercy. They fell almost simultaneously, the *thuds* of their bodies a welcome sound. He holstered his weapon.

The little girl had begun to cry.

“Shh,” he repeated, pulling a bandanna from a cargo pocket on his pants. He tried to wipe as much blood and viscera off of her as he could. She didn’t seem to be injured herself, thankfully.

When he opened the door into the cabin, he met darkness and quiet.

“Hannibal,” Will called as calmly as he could manage. “I’m here to help. The soviet soldiers are dead. I’m American. I’ll take you and Mischa to safety. I mean you no harm.”

There was no response for a moment, and then a feral-looking little boy crept into the daylight cast by the open door. His left wrist trailed a rope. His right showed rope burn and small cuts. His small fist clutched a paring knife like a lifeline.

“Hello Hannibal,” Will greeted.

“How is it that you know our names?” the small boy growled like an angry kitten.

“Time travel,” Will said more-or-less honestly. “I know you in the future. I’m here to help.”

Hannibal looked like he didn’t believe a word of it. To be fair, Will hadn’t expected to appear where he had, when he had, and the only person he had cared about *helping* during his journey was himself. This situation had him tense, no matter that it was technically exactly what he’d wanted when he commissioned his watch. The entire purpose of the watch had been to facilitate travel with Hannibal until they found a universe in which Mischa was still alive, so they could care for her and live somewhere they weren’t wanted men.

Will hadn’t expected to do it alone, but he could never abandon the kids now that he’d found them.

“If there’s anything here you want to keep, you’d better grab it now. Your sister needs medical attention, the sooner the better.”

Hannibal’s attention immediately latched onto his sister, love and worry plain on his face. Will watched the boy’s face flicker through emotions as he resolved to take this chance for help, even if it was all a lie. His sister might die without assistance. This man potentially saving his sister’s life was worth the possibility of his death. This young Hannibal had not perfected the masks he would wear as an adult. His thoughts were plain as day to Will’s empathy.

“I need nothing from this place.”

“Okay,” Will acknowledged. “Now,” he said as he guided one of Mischa’s little doll hands to the watch. “I need you to touch this watch. Don’t stop touching it until I nod at you, okay?”

Hannibal nodded, moving the knife into his left hand and reaching for the watch with his right.

Once both children were firmly in contact with the watch, he pressed the button.

They appeared in surroundings he recognized. The hallway of the cliff house. They faced a door, to a bedroom if he remembered correctly, that locked from the outside.

Will held his finger to his lips, quietly shuffling the children into the guest bathroom and very slowly turning the lock. He nodded at little Hannibal that he could stop touching the watch.

He had no idea where an adult Hannibal might be at that moment, but he would rather not deal with him if he could avoid it. Regardless of his original plans, these kids deserved to be raised by a Hannibal who wasn't a cannibalistic serial killer if at all possible, and he was certain that any Hannibal who caught sight of Mischa would never let them go.

He encouraged Hannibal with hand gestures to sit down on the plush rugs covering the floor, keeping his finger over his mouth. He propped poor Mischa between Hannibal and the wall, unsure as to whether or not she would be able to sit up by herself.

The nice thing about Hannibal's homes was that they tended to come equipped with decent first aid kits, one of which he pulled from the cabinet beneath the sink. He hugged it to him as he unzipped it, attempting to muffle the noise and succeeding more or less. He extracted a high-calorie emergency ration bar, carefully unwrapped it, and gave it to Hannibal. "Eat slowly," he whispered.

A few packets of electrolyte drink powder were next, with a collapsed silicone water bottle. He pocketed the rest of the drink mixes and food bars and emptied into his bag the supplies he was running low of in his own kit. He pulled out his own empty water bottle as well. He needed them to be ready to leave in case the sound of water running through pipes was noticed and traced.

He listened intently for a moment before turning on the cold water tap with care, filling the two bottles as quickly as possible. Once they were full, he poured the electrolyte powders inside and gently shook the bottles to mix. Still, he heard no sound outside of the bathroom. Possibly Hannibal was in his basement or busy outside. Hopefully he wasn't lurking on the other side of the door.

He handed the larger bottle to little Hannibal, pleased to see that the child was actually eating fairly slowly for someone who was starving. "Drink slowly," he whispered, nodding to the bottle. Hannibal nodded in understanding.

The other bottle, he pulled open the cap to allow the liquid to exit the small opening. Mischa was small and weak. There was no way she would be able to hold the bottle herself. He telegraphed his moves as he slowly, gently picked up the small child and held her against his chest. He put the mouthpiece against her miniature lips and slowly began to trickle the liquid into her mouth.

At first, he feared that it was too late for this method, that she didn't have energy to drink, but to his great relief she seemed to perk up slightly and began sucking at the mouthpiece, thankfully not so fast that he thought it would make her vomit. He couldn't be certain, though. He wished more than anything that he had a version of Hannibal he could *trust* there to help them.

Was any version of Hannibal Lecter trustworthy?

He allowed her to drink part of the bottle before tucking it into his lap next to her and digging some ointment out of the remnants of the first aid kit. He carefully applied it under her nose and on her lips.

To his immense relief, she seemed a little more alert already, and was reaching for her brother. She hadn't shown any interest in much of anything until then.

Hannibal seemed relieved too, scooting towards Mischa's place in Will's arms and holding her hands.

It was just as well, because at that moment the doorknob rattled and the lock began to turn, undoubtedly overcome by an emergency key. Will took the hands of both children and placed them on the watch quickly, then pressed the button.

—

The three of them reappeared safely, still seated on the ground, but they were in the cliff house hallway again, looking up at the same bedroom door that locked from the outside.

If his watch was stuck on this useless house far from civilization, he was going to be pissed.

He pressed the watch button. Cliff house.

Again. Cliff house.

Again. Cliff house.

He wanted to scream or cry. He just wanted a safe place where he could google how to fix a sick baby, goddamn it. So far, he had been using the same methods he would for an adult, but he had no idea if a toddler could be given medication, or even what to feed one. His experience with kids was nonexistent.

He pressed the button again and sighed in relief. Wolf Trap, the kitchen.

He put his finger over his lips again and put the children behind the kitchen cupboards, between the cupboards and the back door. He could hear someone moving around in the front of the house, and he expected that it was Hannibal. Whether he was planting evidence or had some other purpose, he didn't care at that moment.

He opted to hunker down behind the cabinets as well and wait the man out. He would leave, and then they would have a safe place for a while.

The next several minutes - he couldn't tell how long, maybe ten, maybe forty, felt like an eternity. He could tell that Mischa was sick, tired, and unhappy, but little Hannibal was able to keep her from crying despite his own fear.

Finally, he heard the dogs come inside, the front door close, and a car drive away. He let out a sigh of relief. Motioning for the kids to stay where they were, he checked and cleared all of the rooms in the house, sidetracked for only a moment to hush the suddenly-excited dogs *and* note the presence of some cats. The house was nicer than usual, too. This universe's Will had traded in some of the 60 year old furniture for pieces that, if Will wasn't mistaken, had been hand made. By Will? He shook his head. Not important.

When it seemed all was clear, he returned to the kitchen.

"Okay," he said gently. "We should be safe for now. Let's get you two cleaned up, yeah?"

He picked Mischa up again and grabbed the water bottle, carefully feeding her more of the electrolyte mixture as he led Hannibal up the stairs into the bathroom. Mischa looked old enough to feed herself in normal times, but she needed to recover first.

"Hannibal, would you like to have a bath first?" At the boy's conflicted expression, he continued, "Mischa and I can wait right out here on the toilet seat so you can check on her whenever you need to. You can pull the curtain closed or I can turn my back, okay? I'm going to wet a wash cloth and clean up her face and hands."

Still appearing somewhat unsure, Hannibal nodded. Will's heart hurt for him. He definitely needed therapy after his parents were killed and he and his baby sister were held as prisoners. Mischa might need therapy too if she remembered what had happened; she had also witnessed the execution of the man who would have been her murderer. He dearly hoped that she would not remember being splattered with blood and brains.

"Check underneath the sink for towels," Will instructed.

"What do I call you?" little Hannibal spoke up, nervous but putting on a brave face. How old was he? Younger than ten, probably, but Will was bad at guessing ages.

"I'm Will," he offered. Hannibal nodded, accepting the answer.

Will offered a short tutorial on how to work the American-style faucet and tap. Hannibal, a quick study, ran himself a bath without issues, Will turning his back so the child could undress and climb into his first bath in a long time.

Will looked into Mischa's sleepy eyes. She seemed stronger, but he definitely needed to consult the internet. What on earth had he gotten himself into?

Chapter End Notes

I'm afraid that this is the end of Will murdering almost every Hannibal he meets. Little Hannibal already has major trust issues, and Will murdering all of the adult Hannibals would not help in the slightest. Time for Will to try very, very hard to be a better person. <3

What They Need

Chapter Summary

The universe is kind to our dimension jumpers.

Will sat downstairs in the house he had once seen as his ship on the sea. The lights were mostly off, only the upstairs hallway and bathroom lights left on in case the kids needed the toilet. An overturned crate was functioning as a step stool for Mischa, though of course her brother would help her.

They had both been bathed and dressed in oversize t-shirts for bed, their original clothing laundered and ready for them to wear in the morning despite some damage. He had treated the rope burns and small cuts on Hannibal's wrists with ointment and bandages. When Will had left the kids in the rarely-used guest bedroom, they were cuddled in the middle of the bed together, very quiet. Traumatized. He hadn't even considered trying to take Hannibal's small knife away from him, though he did intend to get him a folding one instead of a fixed-blade, for safety's sake.

He was relying heavily on little Hannibal, who knew far more about caring for Mischa than Will ever would. The boy was rightfully cautious around Will, not trusting him much at all. Considering the circumstances, most notably the fact that had Hannibal been young man instead of a kid Will probably would have killed him, the boy was correct to be wary.

That was fine with Will as long as the boy focused most of his attention on caring for and protecting his baby sister. She was alive, after all, and the men who had abused the both of them had been killed and were in a different dimension besides, so he wouldn't need to spend his adolescence focused on vengeance.

Will was afraid to sleep. He wasn't sure where his other self was, and felt the need to be awake when they met. He was keyed up about recent events, anyway, anxious and out of his depth when it came to childcare.

So, he sat with a friendly tabby cat on his lap and that universe's version of Max doing her best to smash his feet with her body weight, his face aglow with light from the tablet he had found charging next to the bed. He generally preferred his laptop for research, but presumably that universe's Will had it with him for work.

His open tabs included:
"How to care for sick 2 year old" *(so far so good)*
"How to talk to kids" *(it seemed both simple and complicated)*
"Signs of psychopathy in kids" *(just in case)*
"Chesapeake Ripper" *(he existed but was still on a hiatus)*

“Garret Jacob Hobbs” *(arrested by local PD based on information obtained from the FBI, awaiting trial, wife and daughter in protective custody)*
“Will Graham” *(a lecturer, strangely a longtime friend of Margot Verger, and probably a murderer according to Freddy Lounds who was a <u>man</u>)*
“Walmart near me” *(the kids needed a few changes of clothes)*

With the local Will involved in any way with the Vergers, he knew he couldn’t stay there for any significant length of time with the kids, without removing Mason from the land of the living. He couldn’t let Mason even know of their existence. He smiled at the thought of jumping through dimensions as he had been, but to kill Mason instead. That was another thing. His watch was acting up and he didn’t know why. He wanted to recalibrate it in any case, to jump to other versions of himself instead of Hannibal.

He clicked a small lamp on, pulled the watch off of his wrist, then slid the DNA card out. He couldn’t help a soft laugh and head shake. Perhaps the unreliable performance of the watch had something to do with all but a few tiny specks of Hannibal’s blood being gone from the card. He felt like an idiot for not checking sooner. Hopefully that was the problem, because it was the only thing he knew how to fix by himself. The last few specks of Hannibal’s blood flaked away with some pressure from his thumbnail.

He pulled his own folding knife from a pocket and pricked the skin on the interior of his left arm. He squeezed the wound to draw blood, then dipped the card in it, coating both sides before inserting it into the watch once again. He was cognizant that there might be traces of Hannibal’s blood left and he would need to be vigilant when jumping with the kids, in case they didn’t end up somewhere safe.

The sound of a car rolling down the long driveway snapped Will out of his thoughts. He knew little about the local Will beyond the limited information online, and his observation based on the current population of the house that he was open to adopting stray dogs *and* cats.

He stayed put, lamp and tablet still illuminating his face, hoping to minimize any alarm on his other self’s behalf by not creeping around in the dim house. Regardless, the sound of a gun being cocked was audible through the front door.

The door opened, the nose of the handgun coming through the door first. Will sighed. “It’s okay,” he called. “I’m Will Graham from another dimension and you’re not hallucinating.” He heard a scoff before he saw the other Will’s face in the light from the porch fixture.

His face wasn’t quite the same as his own and the others he had met. This Will’s face was a bit more fine-boned, jaw just a little more rounded, and besides that, he seemed a little shorter and less broad than he was used to seeing. Undeniably another version of himself, in any case.

The other Will flicked on the interior lights and stared at him in disbelief, then groaned. “I have always known I am male, and I didn’t need a visit from an alternate universe cis-self to prove it, thank you very much. Goddamn hallucinations.”

“Ah, assigned female? Tough break,” he said with honest sympathy. That explained the minor differences he had observed. He felt like an ass for thinking so, but he was genuinely relieved he hadn’t had to live that experience. The amount of prejudice, misunderstanding, and hoop jumping transfolk had to deal with was unreal. To cope with all of that on top of his empathy *thing* would have been a true test of perseverance. “You’re looking good, though,” he said with a grin. He had never appreciated his own attractiveness before he started meeting other versions of himself.

“Thanks so much, my hallucinated twin. I am extremely gratified that my self finds me good looking,” Will deadpanned.

He couldn’t help the barked laugh, but tried to quiet himself quickly. “So hey, when you go upstairs, don’t be alarmed when you find some small children in the guest bedroom.”

“Say what now? Am I also hallucinating kids? Why would I be hallucinating kids?”

“You’re not hallucinating,” he insisted. “I found them in another universe being held captive and I’m trying to take care of them.”

“You’re serious,” he stated with a flat stare.

“Completely.”

“Well, fuck. What are we going to do about that?”

“To start, call me DJ. I don’t suppose you know anything about childcare.”

Will stared at him, unamused. “I may have been vaguely fem-presenting as a teenager, but I was still weird. People don’t ask weird people to babysit.”

DJ sighed. “Yeah, nobody trusted me with their kids either.”

Thus, they had established that Will knew just as much about children as DJ did: approximately nothing. He hadn’t really anticipated anything different, but they were far enough away from his original universe that something like werewolf Hannibal could happen, so who knew. It was getting more and more possible that he could run into a Will with biological children at some point. He was a little bit disturbed that werewolf Hannibal was more likely than a parent Will, actually. Maybe the Hannibal-prompted murder of his and Margot’s child had actually preserved the integrity of his original universe.

Or maybe Hannibal was an asshole, and Will had children in some of these universes who just happened to be raised by their mothers. That was a slightly amusing, slightly sad thought. It relied on the assumption that no one thought Will would be a good parent, or at minimum they personally didn’t want to deal with him so preferred to keep him uninvolved.

He shook his head, trying to rid himself of the self-deprecating narrative he was building in his mind. He cleared his throat. “Before you meet them,” DJ said to Will, “you should be aware that the boy is a child version of Hannibal Lecter, who I assume you know.”

Will gave him an *are you kidding me* eyebrow raise for that. “The child version of my unofficial therapist is sleeping in a guest room upstairs?”

DJ nodded. “And the little girl is his baby sister. I’m guessing that in this universe, she was killed. You can’t tell your therapist about her while we’re here. He wouldn’t let us leave.”

“*Should* the three of you leave? Maybe you should give the kids to him to raise,” Will said, logically. “Even if he doesn’t know how to take care of them, he can afford a nanny.”

“If this universe is like all of the others, your therapist is the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Will’s eyes narrowed, his gaze flickering from place to place as he thought the accusation through. His shoulders sagged. “I can see that being true,” he allowed. “Damn it. I’ll call Jack. He won’t like that I have no legitimate reason to accuse Dr. Lecter, but he’s better placed to dig for evidence than I am.” He grumbled obscenities to himself as he walked into the kitchen, tugging a phone out of his pocket.

—

The next morning, thankfully a Saturday, Will and DJ fed the kids a stomach-gentle breakfast of fluffy scrambled eggs and buttered bread before loading them into the Volvo and driving to Walmart. Mischa was still sleepy, still suffering from her cold, but Hannibal was bright-eyed and interested in the world flying by outside of his window.

“Hey Hannibal?” DJ said. The boy looked at him in acknowledgment. “Do you have a nickname? I can’t keep calling you and your adult version the same thing.”

Hannibal looked away, pointedly, but Mischa ruined his attempt at ignoring DJ’s question. “Iba!” she exclaimed, like ee-buh.

“That’s what you like to call him, Mischa?” DJ asked the little girl. She nodded, her sad expression a little bit lighter when talking about her brother.

“Would you be very upset if we all called you Iba?” DJ asked Hannibal.

“It’s a girl’s name,” he grumbled.

“We could call you something like Junior instead, if you prefer,” DJ offered.

He thought Hannibal might have actually shuddered at that suggestion. “Iba is fine,” he said grudgingly.

“What about Ab?” Will asked. “It means Lion, if I recall correctly, and it is traditionally a boy’s name.”

After a moment, Hannibal - or Ab, rather - accepted the suggestion with more grace, “Ab is good.” He didn’t mind being a lion, DJ supposed.

“Ab it is,” DJ said with a decisive nod.

DJ imagined Will poring over lists of names many years ago to find the one that fit him best. It seemed an extraordinary coincidence that he would have settled on Will. “Do you mind if I ask how you got the name Will?” he wondered.

Will shrugged. “Asked dad what he would have named me.”

“Oh,” DJ said, internally rolling his eyes at himself. “That makes sense.”

Will smirked and side-eyed him. “Did you think it was fate?”

“I can honestly say that I don’t believe in fate,” DJ denied. “I believe in choices having consequences.”

“Fair enough.”

—

The trip to Walmart was overwhelming for the kids, who had never in their lives experienced such a place. Ab defaulted to wariness and caution rather than excitement when confronted with such an extraordinary environment, but Mischa’s wide eyes and grabby hands were endearing. Her excitement lasted until after she tried on some clothes to find her proper size and then was asked too many times whether or not she liked something. After she closed her eyes and refused to answer any more questions, DJ and Will both felt bad and left her alone. They chose neutral, inoffensive clothes and a small purple backpack for her while she sat unhappily silent in the cart, her brother holding her hands and looking equally unhappy.

Ab’s main concern was making his own selections as quickly as possible so they could leave the horrible place. Despite his hurry, DJ and Will were both amused as he selected button-down shirts in bold patterns, and slacks in pinstripes and checks. Even his chosen underwear were striped, plaid, and checkered. At DJ’s prompting, he selected a t-shirt, sweater, and pajamas as well. DJ had always thought Hannibal’s ridiculous fashion choices were part of an intentionally cultivated disguise, but evidently there was more to it.

Mischa tolerated them measuring her foot and then trying some shoes on her, wiggling her toes when asked. Both kids got sneakers and many socks. Ab insisted on a pair of oxfords because of course he did.

DJ took a side-trip to find a folding knife and some collapsible water bottles in sporting goods and grab a duffel bag from the luggage aisle, understanding that their purchases would not fit in their available backpacks, before heading for the groceries to meet back up with the others. Will had already chosen a few boxes of children’s electrolyte powder and an assortment of shelf-stable snacks, as well as a few regular groceries he needed at home. After one last stop in the pharmacy aisles for sunblock, baby acetaminophen, and any other baby- or toddler-useful thing they spotted, they made it through the check-out and out of the store as quickly as possible.

They were all relieved to walk out of the punishing artificial lights and into the sunlight. They were even more relieved to return to Wolf Trap.

The kids allowed themselves to be buried in cats and dogs, both falling asleep near the fireplace.

DJ and Will had to be responsible, or something resembling it, so they relocated to the kitchen with the bags, removed tags, and packed everything in the packs and duffel. He wanted to make sure the kids each had at least one change of clothes in their own backpacks as well as some snacks and water, and basic first aid supplies, in case of emergency. The excess went in the duffel.

"So what's the plan?" Will asked. "You're moving on, right?"

"I want to find an adult Hannibal who isn't the Ripper," he said. "There has to be one somewhere."

"What will you do about the ones who are the Ripper?" he wondered.

"I've re-calibrated my watch to find versions of us instead of versions of Hannibal. That will be safer. I'll tell the other Wills about Hannibal as necessary. By the way, we ended up here because he was here yesterday afternoon. Did you know?"

"No," Will said, looking a little disturbed. "I guess he still has my spare key from when he fed the animals."

"Okay, check to see if there are any human remains in your fishing flies, or anything else out of place. Also, you might have encephalitis, if you really have been hallucinating things. Don't trust Hannibal's doctor friend. What else? Oh, stay far away from Abigail Hobbs. I think that's the important stuff. My Hannibal framed me for the Copycat murders and hid the encephalitis from me. So just, be aware."

Will smirked. "I kind of figured I would need to rethink my interactions with him after you told me he was the Ripper. I'll handle it. Don't worry about me."

DJ nodded. "Good."

"What will you do if you meet a version of us who isn't trustworthy?" Will wondered.

DJ paused, contemplating the possible answers. In truth, *he* was the untrustworthy Will Graham. He hadn't only been killing versions of Hannibal Lecter on his adventure. He had been killing every witness to those killings, so his other selves could not be held responsible due to their testimony. He didn't even know how many innocent people he had killed, and he didn't particularly care. He didn't know if it was better or worse that he felt no compulsion to kill. Every death was a choice, for him, and he chose to kill even people he liked, when they were inconvenient.

He was *not* a good person. Hannibal was largely responsible for crafting him into the person he was, and Hannibal had certainly been the one to teach him how to switch off his empathy when feeling for others would be inconvenient, but that didn't make him less of a monster. He was acutely aware that the person he was when interacting with his other selves was the mask representing who he wished he could be, not who he was.

“Don’t worry,” DJ said. “I’ll keep the possibility in mind, but I think most of us would hesitate to hurt another Will Graham or kids.”

There. Truth.

—

Monday morning, after giving everyone ample time to recover from the Saturday shopping trip and feeding them several appropriately-sized and easily-digestible meals, DJ decided it was time for them to take their chances elsewhere.

They all waved at Will as he left for work, then returned to the living room and picked up their already-packed bags. Holding Mischa while she wore her backpack was awkward and she was feeling much stronger, so DJ crouched down and held his wrist in easy reach of the kids, sandwiching their small hands to the device with his palm as he pressed the red button with his finger.

They appeared in the corner of a wood-paneled living room, a lanky teenage Will curled in the corner of a couch with his homework, and a man on the floor, tinkering with a boat motor.

“Papa?” DJ asked, surprised.

Will and Bill Graham quickly looked at him in alarm. “What the…” Will began.

“Language,” Bill corrected him. “Who are you and what are you doing here?” He wasn’t mean or hostile. His papa never was. Just authoritative. Insistent that he receive an answer.

“I’m a dimension traveler,” DJ explained. “I was him,” he nodded at Will, “several decades ago. I haven’t seen you in too long, pops. You passed when I was maybe thirty? You should get your heart checked.”

The man looked taken aback, then suspicious, then decisive. “What did you do when I told you it was time for The Talk?”

Will groaned and covered his face, still on the couch. It was a recent trauma, he guessed.

DJ smirked. “It startled me so bad that I fell flailing off the boat, then decided that I’d rather swim with the gators than talk, so I swam to shore and walked home soaking wet.” Bill nodded, seemingly satisfied.

“Wha’s the talk?” Mischa asked. Ab looked curious too.

“You’ll find out later, kiddo,” Bill answered her. “They yours?” he looked at DJ.

“Not by blood,” he said. “I found them in a bad situation a few universes ago. This is Ab, and this little one is Mischa.”

Bill smiled. “I planned on making fish and fries for dinner. That sound good?” He talked directly to the kids. Their opinion was what he wanted.

DJ felt like slapping himself on the forehead. He and his papa had been poor, but his pops was a *good* father. Forget about finding a version of himself who knew something about kids, or the perfect version of Hannibal.

Right then, his papa was exactly who he needed.

I Need to Find Someone

Chapter Summary

Will's dad helps him learn how to parent, and the adventure continues.

Day 3

DJ woke to the sound of an unfamiliar laugh.

He pulled himself upright, wincing at the twinges of pain from sleeping on the couch. As he stretched his arms above his head and rolled his neck, the laughter came again. It seemed to be originating from Will's bedroom.

It wasn't the awkward pubescent creaking of Will's chuckle, nor Mischa's high ringing bell tones. *It must be Ab,* he thought. *He's laughing?*

They had been with his pops and younger self for three days, Ab and Mischa sleeping in Will's bed while Will took the floor. DJ had been surprised at how well Ab and Will got along, considering the age gap of several years and the fact that Will hadn't truly studied the philosophical nonsense Hannibal preferred to go on and on about until he entered college. Then again, he shouldn't have been surprised. They were Hannibal and Will, after all. And he supposed the eight year old Ab might not be thoroughly versed in mythology and lore yet, either. *He* hadn't had any meaningful conversations with the kid, so he didn't know.

When DJ peeked in on the group, he found the boys trying to teach Mischa how to play Candy Land, clearly with Mischa's entertainment in mind. She was giggling with delight, her sweet smile radiating contentment, a gift she regularly bestowed upon them all. She was a remarkably happy child when she wasn't dying from starvation and dehydration. Her cold had cleared up as well. DJ thought it might have had more to do with the cold temperatures they had been kept in than it did with a virus.

Ab's smile, though, was a rare gift. He had been understandably somber from the time of the rescue. Unlike his baby sister he had been able to comprehend what had happened to their parents in addition to subsequently becoming a victim of starvation and mistreatment. He was likely able to guess what might have happened to Mischa without DJ's intervention, as well.

After taking a moment to enjoy the happy atmosphere in the kids' room, DJ joined Bill in the kitchen. In companionable silence, Bill made waffles while DJ set the table and extracted the syrup and butter from the refrigerator.

—

Day 5

He'd never forgotten about all the places his papa had taken him to over the years as he grew, and he had sometimes wondered how the man had found all of the free and inexpensive places to visit without the internet.

"The newspaper," Bill had said when he'd asked, eyebrow raised and lips twitching. "And yellow pages." DJ supposed that much of the internet was basically a giant newspaper and yellow pages, so that made sense.

Bill continued, "It's not good for any of you to sit around here all day while Will's at school and I'm at work, kiddo."

DJ smirked, examining the list Bill had handed over. "Don't get me wrong. I like being called kiddo by you, but I think I'm technically old enough to be your father at this point."

"You sure are," Bill agreed. "Don't change the subject."

DJ sighed. "Yeah, I know. Ab entertains Mischa during the day by reading to her, drawing with her, and running around outside, but I know what you mean."

"The back of that paper has a list of places that charge entry fees that are more than a few dollars. You don't seem to have the same limitations I do when it comes to money."

That both was and wasn't true. He had packed plenty of cash when he left home. He had managed to get his hands on era-appropriate bills (not that easy living in Canada several decades after the old designs were replaced), but he didn't have a huge amount of usable money for the time period. The re-designs issued in the mid-2000s looked like cartoonish play money in their current time period circa 1990. Still, he had enough to help with groceries and pay museum and zoo entry fees. If they stayed longer than a month or so, though, he would need to find a job.

"If there are any Will hasn't been to, I'll save those for the weekends so he can come too. You too, if you want."

Bill nodded his agreement.

"Iba!!" Mischa's small voice rang out from the yard outside. "Worm!! Look!"

DJ chuckled, watching through the window as fascinated Ab examined the wriggling worm in Mischa's small hand, carefully running the tip of one finger along its body.

—

Day 8

True to his word, DJ had begun taking the kids out every few days, with plans to introduce them to museums, playgrounds, and nature trails.

Their first stop had been an art museum, a quiet one with few visitors. Ab loved it, to no one's surprise. There were no Botticelli works on view, of course, but plenty to nourish Ab's appreciation for aesthetics, regardless.

A few days later, they had visited the zoo. The crowds got to be too much after a few hours, but Mischa adored the children's section where she got to cuddle guinea pigs, pet big pink pigs, and feed goats. They'd had a small problem when she got soaked standing next to a water jet, one of many set up for kids to run around in during the hot days, but luckily after her initial shock and tears, she calmed and dried fairly quickly in the sunlight and heat.

On off-days they played at the house or went to the library. The children's section included books for elementary age and younger in addition to a young adult section with slightly more advanced books for middle-schoolers. Both kids found books to entertain them. Ab hovered in the history section and looked things up in encyclopedias before dipping his toes into science fiction. Mischa loved the toys and picture books.

Bill had been very generous. He was fine with the kids building forts out of pillows, blankets, and cardboard boxes. He didn't mind that his sidewalks were covered in chalk. He let the kids help him cook, Mischa doing simple tasks like pouring blueberries into the pancake batter and Ab learning the various ways veggies could be cut (and how to avoid cutting his own fingers). Bill joined in when the kids had a tea party, and he created a set of wooden blocks out of scrap wood for Mischa to play with, all sanded down to be safe for tiny fingers. That had all been in the *first week* of their stay.

Bill Graham was a good father. How he had managed to make them so comfortable so soon after their traumatic experiences was incomprehensible to DJ.

DJ was kind of lost. He felt like he was maybe making some progress when they went out, answering their questions as well as he could (which was pretty well), but the awkwardness he had always felt around other people didn't go away when he was with kids.

Teenager Will was feeling it too. He could tell that the boy was going slightly crazy sharing his space with two young kids. He managed to join in playing sometimes, having had a lot more recent practice than DJ had, but if DJ could rent them all a bigger house with extra bedrooms, he wouldn't hesitate. Will had always needed privacy to recharge. Three guests, two of them kids sleeping in his room, were draining his emotional and mental batteries.

"You know, kiddo," his pops said one day. "No parent really knows what they're doing. Everybody's winging it. Everybody feels like they're doing everything wrong."

DJ sighed. "You're *so* good with them."

"I have the advantage of having done this before, and not all that long ago. You may not remember how hopeless I was when you were tiny. It takes time to get the hang of it, and you've had, what? A little over a week?"

"Yeah," DJ said, frowning.

"You're doing fine," Bill insisted. "You know I don't lie to you."

"Thanks," he whispered.

—

Day 12

“I like to eat grapes,” Mischa said from her seat in the shopping cart.

“I know you do, kiddo. We’re definitely getting some grapes.” DJ smiled at her.

“I like to eat apples,” she added.

“Yes, I know.”

“I like ice cream.”

“Don’t we all,” he said with a chuckle.

“I like strawberries and blueberries.”

“We will get *all* the fruit you could possibly want, little girl.”

She moved on to humming pieces of a song he’d heard her hum before and watching her brother examine the towers of fruits and vegetables in the produce section.

“Iba,” Mischa called to her brother. “I like kiwis.”

“We’ve only had them once,” Ab said. “…but I like them too.”

“Ab, your sister and I have a mission for you,” he said, very seriously. “It involves collecting all of the fruit she listed. And then depositing it in the shopping cart. Do you know the trick to opening the horrible plastic produce bags?”

—

Day 17

“Hannibal,” DJ said to Ab, “do you have a minute to talk?”

Ab was sitting on the back porch in the light from a sunset, sketching the yard and surrounding houses with the supplies DJ had bought for him from an art museum gift shop. He looked up at DJ with slight trepidation, though not nearly as much as he once had. “You called me Hannibal. Does that mean I should call you Will?”

“You can if you want,” DJ affirmed. “It’s just easier to use nicknames sometimes, you know?”

Ab nodded, though he didn’t look very convinced. He was very good at not looking convinced. He was a cautious, skeptical kid, and DJ understood completely. He was just grateful that the two of them had reached a point where they were able to converse.

“What do you want to do, Hannibal? I’m trying to make some decisions, but this will affect you and Mischa even more than it will me. Should we stay here? Should we try to find

another Hannibal? Do you want to stay with me, stay with Bill, take your chances with someone else?" he sighed. "Sorry for rambling, kid. Just a lot on my mind."

"Um," Ab said, turning and rubbing the side of the pencil in his hand, fidgety. "You mean, should we jump to another universe and leave Bill and Will behind?"

DJ sighed. "Yes."

"I think we have to," he said with the weight of a confession. "Will is really sad. And he should have all of his papa's attention."

DJ nodded in understanding. "Yeah, I've gotten the same feeling."

"It's not fair for Will."

"Okay. You're okay if we plan to jump again, then? You won't be too sad about leaving?"

"I'll miss them," Ab said. "But I want Will to be happy and to not have to share his papa. It's better if we go."

"You're a good kid, Hannibal. I'm glad we met."

"Me too."

—

Day 23

"So," Bill said. "What's your plan?"

"I think we'll leave in a week," DJ said. "I can't thank you enough for what you've done for us. We've intruded on your hospitality and I *know* you don't mind it, but it's been hard on Will."

Bill bowed his head, mouth drawing tight. "He's doing better now the kids are sleeping in their fort under the table."

DJ nodded. "And now there are kids sleeping under your kitchen table with every spare pillow, and the table has been draped with blankets," DJ said with a chuckle. "Will needs space, you need space, and I need to find something."

"Something?"

"Someone."

—

Day 30

"I'll miss you, papa. Spending all this time with you again is more than I could have asked for. Please get your heart checked out, okay? Will shouldn't lose you as soon as I did."

“I’ve enjoyed seeing you all grown up, kiddo,” Bill said. “I know there are things you haven’t said, and I know you’ve made choices you think I wouldn’t approve of. You’re probably right. But underneath it all you’re a good man, Will. Don’t sell yourself short.”

“Thanks,” he forced through, his throat tight with emotion. “I have some dust in my eyes,” he said with a teary chuckle. He wasn’t someone who thought men shouldn’t cry, but it had been something he and his pops had always said during emotional moments they wanted to redirect to happier subjects.

“Will?” he said to the teenager standing next to his papa. “You’ll remember what I said?”

“Yeah,” he croaked. “Thanks.” He met DJ’s eyes, blue to blue, and nodded once. “Good luck to all three of you,” he added.

Ab and Mischa both hugged Will and his pops one last time before all of them grabbed their bags and the two kids clustered at Will’s left side, reaching for the watch.

—

They appeared in a—

“Is this an *underground tunnel?*” DJ asked, incredulously.

“Oh good,” a brand new Will said from where he was propped against a stone wall. “I’ve reached the hallucination stage of dehydration already. That was quick.” He looked at a digital wrist watch.

“What are you doing in a *tunnel*, and wearing *that*?” Will was wearing a hard hat and climbing harness.

Will, probably in his mid- to late-twenties, rolled his eyes. “It’s a *mine.* I’m a geologist. I’m taking ore samples. Was taking samples. Now I’m waiting to die.”

“A bird!” Mischa exclaimed, pointing at a fuzzy black bat flying down the tunnel.

“Kids don’t belong in mines,” Will said, looking confused.

“Why are you waiting to die?” DJ wondered.

Will vaguely gestured with his head. “Old timbers broke, gobbing gave way. This drift is a dead-end, no stope or winze connecting to another level. Trapped, just me and that bat.”

“Oh my goodness!” Mischa said, clearly excited. “Shiny!” She pointed at the wall, where tiny crystals glittered in the light from Will’s emergency lantern.

“Calcite,” Will offered.

“You’re not trying to escape?” Ab asked, confused. He removed his backpack and extracted a water bottle, pouring electrolyte powder in it. He shook it before offering it to Will.

Will appeared startled when a solid, real bottle made contact with his fingers.

“Whoaaaa,” Will said. “The kids were only fine when this was a hallucination. What are you people doing here? You can’t be here.” He did open the bottle and sip from it, though, his eyes closing in pleasure.

“I was trying to escape,” he said after he drank some water. “It’s too much rock to move before my body gives out. On the very off-chance someone does come to rescue me, I’ll last longer if I don’t expend energy.”

“Is it too much rock to move before both our bodies give out?” DJ wondered.

Will looked at him, unimpressed. “Yes, it is.”

“Guess that means you aren’t a werewolf?”

Will glared. “Werewolves don’t exist.”

DJ supposed that Geologist Will wasn’t quite as weird as Werewolf Hannibal, despite it being the first comparison to come to mind. “Shame. You’d probably have more endurance. No rescue?”

Will rolled his eyes again. “This mine has been abandoned for seventy years. My safety flag is outside, but that’s an hour's walk and two hour drive from civilization. I work freelance. It’ll be a while before anybody notices I haven’t returned from this trip. Seriously, how are you here?”

DJ wondered if there was a maximum guest limit on his watch, then shrugged the concern off. The thing was basically magic, and worst case scenario, they would all die quickly.

“Okay, kids, you know the drill,” he said as he extended his left arm towards Will, who looked at it like it was a rattlesnake. “Touch the watch, Will,” he said.

“That’s okay, I have my own watch,” Will said.

“You should touch his watch,” Ab said. “We’ll escape you.”

“Ex-scape!” Mischa yelled, giggling. She was moving her head back and forth. Possibly, the crystals sparkled better when she did that.

“Isha,” Ab whispered at his sister. “Time to go.”

“I like it here,” she said, shaking her head.

“Maybe you can work in tunnels when you grow up,” DJ offered.

“No,” Will said. “Working in tunnels is a bad life choice.”

“Ab, Mischa, Will, gather round. Time to go.” He could hear something from up the drift. Will seemed pretty certain he wouldn’t be rescued, so DJ was concerned that it might be

additional collapses. He could see Will's head tilt as if listening, as well.

"Yeah, okay, I'll embrace the insanity," Will said. "The watch?" he reached out and laid a finger on it. Ab rounded Mischa up and held her hand to the watch next to his.

"Good? Good," DJ said.

He pressed the red button, and the four people disappeared.

An unfortunate bat kept company by a dying lantern flew up and down the drift as collapse after collapse further up the drift ensured that the poor creature would never escape.

—

DJ relaxed a bit when they appeared in yet another version of his Wolf Trap sanctuary. Geologist Will collapsed backward on the wooden floor, the stone wall no longer holding his weight. DJ could hear an "Oops," as the man propped himself up on his elbows and looked around. Ab picked up the water bottle from where it had fallen.

"How in the hell?" Will the Geologist said.

The local universe's Will, propped up against the headboard of his bed with a book, stared at them. "Took the words out of my mouth. Who are you, how did you get in, and *why* are you here?"

DJ ignored him. This was getting tiring. "Who is the Chesapeake Ripper?" he asked.

"Wish I knew," Will replied. "Haven't solved that one yet."

DJ tossed a balled-up paper to the local Will. He had a plan and had come prepared. He didn't want poor Ab to verbally hear over and over again that Hannibal Lecter was the Chesapeake Ripper, so he wrote relevant information down on many sheets of paper and filled his pockets with them. The safety and happiness of his various selves was still more important to him than the fate of any Hannibal except Ab.

"There's the information you need. And here, look, you can have a twin. Or…brother, anyway. You're probably not the same age. He's a bit dehydrated. He's you, as a geologist. Isn't that fun? Have a nice life!"

He pressed the kids' hands against the watch and pressed the button again, leaving Geologist Will in Wolf Trap.

—

They quickly looked in on several more universes. In each, DJ asked the Will who the Chesapeake Ripper was. The younger ones didn't know what he was talking about, of course, so he just left after tossing them their Hannibal Lecter exposé papers. Quick. Easy.

What he needed was a Will who *should* know who the Ripper was—not the identity, but that the killer existed—but didn't.

He needed a universe where Hannibal Lecter had not become the Chesapeake Ripper.

“Hi,” he greeted his latest self. This one was relaxing on an extremely familiar comfortable leather couch in front of a fireplace that only lacked a bleeding-out Hannibal on the hearth. *This* was the Graham version of Will, though not the exact Graham with whom he had become so intimately familiar.

“Who is the Chesapeake Ripper?” he asked, as usual.

“The *what*, now?” Graham responded, genuine curiosity in his eyes.

Will *(he could think of himself as Will again, now he’d found another Graham!)* held his breath, trying to suppress a surge of *hope*. Could this be the one?

Almost Like TV

Chapter Summary

A look at Geologist Will in his new environment (the beginning of a beautiful friendship).

Will collapsed backward on the wooden floor, the stone wall no longer holding his weight. “Oooops,” he said with a bit of chagrin as he propped himself up on his elbows. He vaguely registered the kid collecting his water bottle from the floor.

“How in the hell?” he asked, trying to process what was happening.

A slightly older version of himself, propped up against the headboard of his bed with a book, stared at them. “Took the words out of my mouth. Who are you, how did you get in, and *why* are you here?”

The one with the magic watch seemed tired, like he’d had the longest ever day and needed it to be over several hours ago. “Who is the Chesapeake Ripper?” he asked.

“Wish I knew,” the Will on the bed replied. “Haven’t solved that one yet.”

Magic watch guy tossed a balled-up paper to the other guy. “There’s the information you need. And here, look, you can have a twin. Or…brother, anyway. You’re probably not the same age. He’s a bit dehydrated. He’s you, as a geologist. Isn’t that fun? Have a nice life!” And without another word, he pressed the kids’ hands against the watch and pressed the button again, leaving him stranded with the confused man on the bed.

“So…” Will said, looking over at another version of himself. “Um. Hi?”

“What just happened?” the other Will mumbled to himself as he un-balled the crinkled paper, trying to smooth it out on his book.

“I don’t understand it myself,” Will admitted.

“What in hell?” the other guy asked after a few minutes. “Look, I’ve been having some problems lately determining what is real. Could you read this and tell me what it says? Not that it’ll help if you’re a hallucination,” he muttered in defeat.

“Um, that’d be fine,” Will said. “But do you think I could get some water? I’m still pretty dehydrated, and I’m a bit too weak to walk right now.”

The other guy’s eyes went wide. Setting the book and sheet of paper aside, he slid off of the bed and gingerly approached Will, slowly reaching a hand out to his forehead and hair. “Feels

real…" he murmured. "Just a moment." Will watched the other man walk away, hopefully towards a kitchen or bathroom where a glass of water could be acquired.

If he was honest, the other guy was pretty hot. Really nice arse. Could be better if his trousers weren't the frumpy style old men wore. He looked a bit ill, though. Way worse than magic watch guy.

He heard water running, then the other guy appeared with a glass of water and a bottle of sports drink. "Bless you," Will said in gratitude.

"Are you…religious?" the other guy asked, seeming slightly weirded out.

He coughed a little bit. "Just an expression. Haven't been to church since Mrs. Harmon dragged me there as a kid."

The other guy tilted his head. "Every Sunday and Wednesday?"

"Yes, exactly." He drank a few gulps of the sports drink, then a few of the water as the other guy returned to the bed and sat down on the edge. He picked up the piece of paper again and stared at it, intently.

"Would you mind?" he asked, standing again to offer the paper before sitting back down.

Will figured it was the least he could do, considering he'd been dropped in this guy's house with no warning. He was being extraordinarily chill about the situation, actually. He wondered how often weird stuff happened to the dude. Then again, he himself had just been pulled out of a deathtrap and plopped into a nice little house with water, and was pretty chill too. Maybe he was just good at dealing with weirdness.

Feeling a little better, Will scooted across the floor until his back was to an armchair he could lean against. He picked up the paper, and read:

"A faithful narrative of my dealings with Mr. Hannibal Lecter." He cleared his throat. "Is this from Pride and Prejudice? Don't recognize his name, though."

"Please continue," the other guy requested, clearly tense.

"Hannibal Lecter is the serial killer known as the Chesapeake Ripper in every universe I have visited in which I have had the occasion to make his acquaintance, which is the majority. I first met Dr. Lecter in the office of Jack Crawford, SAC BAU, when I was asked to consult on a case concerning eight missing girls in the Minnesota area. Shortly thereafter, Lecter traveled to Minnesota and murdered Cassie Boyle, the first victim of what I would come to call the Copycat killer. […]"

It was all rather fascinating, he thought. Almost like the plot of a TV show. It went into great detail about the estimated timeline of events and claimed that Will had come down with auto-immune encephalitis around the time of, or shortly after, the murders of Cassie Boyle and Marissa Schurr.

"Those names mean anything to you?" Will asked the other guy.

He could see his throat move in a dramatic gulping motion. “Yeah,” he rasped.

“And you mentioned hallucinations. That’s probably a symptom of brain inflammation,” Will pointed out, helpfully.

“Please, just keep reading,” the other guy requested.

“Sure thing, buddy.” He continued the narrative, which ended with the writer, presumably magic watch guy, murdering tons of versions of his ex-boyfriend, one of whom had cheated on him and tried to get his piece on the side to finish magic watch guy off. Which was, um. It all seemed kind of extreme to him, but he guessed that kind of shit might be normal if you’d been living as a serial killer for several years?

“Wow,” Will said. “So, the guy who wrote this, with the magic watch. He was us if we were old, right?”

The other guy cleared his throat. “Seems like it,” he agreed.

“Well, we’d better keep this shit private. Don’t want anyone to know we’re capable of becoming serial killers, eh?”

The other guy snorted. “They already know. I didn’t know. Didn’t want to know.”

“Dude, chill out,” Will said. “You aren’t a serial killer yet, right? And neither am I. As long as we keep that going, we’re fine. It’s not like we’re psychopaths or some shit. We’d have to choose to be serial killers. So we won’t. What’s up with this Lecter guy, though? I mean, if anyone deserves to be killed…” he hinted, wondering if the other guy would actually take the bait. He didn’t actually want to kill anybody, but he wanted to see what the other guy would do.

The other guy stared at him, unamused. “You’re baiting me,” he said.

“Guilty,” Will said with a chuckle. “Listen, murdering people seems like a lot of work. I’m not lazy, you know? I climb around on cliffs and inside mines, and that’s not exactly easy. Would have been fatal if this homicidal magic watch guy hadn’t shown up and dropped me off here. Anyway, what I’m saying is, let’s get you to a hospital and let the cops deal with the serial killer, yeah?”

The other guy, who was hugging himself as if holding himself together, just sighed. “I’ll have to be involved,” he said glumly. “Jack’s going to want evidence and he’ll say I’m best placed to get it.”

“Oh, fuck no,” Will said. “Tell whoever Jack is to fuck off and get the evidence himself. Besides, all he has to do is have dinner with the guy and pocket a chunk of meat, it sounds like. That doesn’t sound too fucking difficult.”

“You say fuck a lot,” the other guy observed.

“Only when I’m fucking pissed off. Not at you, bro. At the assholes around you. Look. Get your shoes on. Where’s your wallet and your keys? I can use your license to drive us to the

hospital, since we're the same fucking person. Do you have a fake ID or something I could use later? We probably can't both be Will Graham forever."

The other guy sighed. "This is so weird," he said dejectedly. "How is any of this even real."

"Dunno," Will admitted. "But this is way more interesting than being dead, probably, so I'm here for it."

"Jesus, you're still…just change out of whatever you're wearing, at least. If you're going to be my knight in shining armor, there are better things you could be wearing than a climbing harness."

Will nodded seriously. "Fashion is absolutely our number one concern right now."

The other guy sighed again. "Fuck off," he said, but he was smiling.

The Better Person

Chapter Summary

Will comes to an uncomfortable realization.

"Who is the Chesapeake Ripper?" Will asked, as usual.

"The *what*, now?" Graham responded, genuine curiosity in his eyes.

"Chesapeake Ripper, the serial killer." He braced himself.

"Sorry, don't know that one. Is he new? Actually, you know what? Let's talk about how you're in my house, children in tow, without my permission. I'm also curious about why my dogs don't seem to mind." Graham's eyebrows were moving towards angry mode.

"Do you work for the FBI?" Will checked. He obviously did. He was basically the SAC Graham from that wonderful universe where Hannibal had impaled himself.

"And why do you look like me?" Graham asked, ignoring Will.

Will laughed at the conversation they were failing at having. Graham glared. "Look, I'm sorry. I'm so tired of this. Dimension hopping has been great, but at this point I just need to find somewhere safe for these kids to live. Do you work for the FBI? And the Chesapeake Ripper doesn't exist? Or maybe a serial killer by another name who removes organs with surgical precision and arranges the bodies like art installations?"

Graham's angry-mode eyebrows had loosened and gone higher and higher on his head. "I almost wish we did have one like that," he said. "Sounds interesting."

Will sighed in relief. "That's one way to describe him, I guess." He straightened his posture out of the defeated slump he hadn't realized he'd adopted. "Hi, my name is Will Graham, and I've jumped through a lot of universes to get here. These are Ab and Mischa," he continued. "I rescued them several universes ago and now I care for them."

"Mischa," Graham whispered. "And Ab?"

"Hannibal," Ab corrected. "Ab is my nickname."

The way Graham tilted his head and stared hard at Ab confirmed something Will had been watching for.

"You know Hannibal Lecter?"

“I do. I would ask if this is some kind of joke, but I don’t see how it could be.”

Will was so exhausted by that point, he wanted to collapse and sleep for a year. “No joke,” he agreed, projecting his emotions in an attempt to convey his honesty. He was a little out of practice. “I found Hannibal’s younger self and the sister he lost in another universe. Did he lose her here?”

Mischa had made herself comfortable in the middle of a doggy pile, quietly giggling when the dogs licked her face. Ab watched both versions of Will Graham closely, a few cats hesitantly nudging his legs. He reached down, crouching, to pet them carefully but didn’t take his eyes off of the men.

“He did lose her,” Graham said, voice low.

“You must know him well,” Will observed, “if you know that about him. How do you know him?”

“Work,” he said shortly.

Will’s head tilted in curiosity. “At the FBI? He’s not your psychiatrist?”

Graham looked puzzled. “Why would he be my psychiatrist? It’s well known that he treats kids.”

Will stilled for a moment. “He’s…a psychiatrist for children?” Graham nodded. Will closed his eyes and tried to decide whether that was excellent or absolutely terrible news. The man who was a cannibalistic serial killer in dozens, probably hundreds, perhaps thousands of universes, treating the mental health of children? “Is he good at it?” Will ventured.

“Award winning,” Graham nodded. “It’s not that surprising, is it? He was a very well-respected pediatrician, after all.”

Will froze, thinking about Hannibal *delivering babies*, laboring mothers *rudely* hurling abuse around in their frustration and pain. Hannibal examining infants and toddlers who puked on him and pulled his hair. Hannibal being kind and charming to children and *teenagers*, dear god, if the man managed not to kill all of the rude teenagers he must be different.

“Could you…” Will hesitated. “Would you mind setting up an appointment for us to meet? I’ve never met a version of Hannibal who specialized in treating children,” he admitted. “And I’d like to meet him before I introduce him to the kids.”

“You can’t keep them from him,” Graham said with a slight frown. “It would be cruel.”

“No, I know,” he said. Except yeah, he could. If this Hannibal seemed like he was hiding something, he and the kids would be off to the next universe at the first opportunity. “I’d rather explain the situation before he meets them,” he said truthfully. “I imagine it would be a shock otherwise.”

“Fair enough,” Graham agreed. “I’ll give him a call. Let’s get the kids set up in the guest room for the night. My bed is big enough for you and I to share.”

Will smirked.

—

A day later, Will stepped out of a cab in front of a charming white stucco cottage with a sign out front denoting the building as office space for *Hannibal Lecter, pediatric psychiatrist and psychotherapist, sliding scale available.*

He entered a waiting room containing toys and books within easy reach of little humans, a friendly-looking woman at the front desk. “Good afternoon, hon, you here to give the doc a screening interview? We’re used to those,” she said with a kind smile. “Do you have an appointment?”

“Uh, yeah, for Graham?” he stood with his hands in the pockets of some pinstriped trousers he had lifted from one of the many Hannibal Lecters he had killed.

“Graham,” she said as she located his name in the computer. “Yes, we were able to fit you in thanks to a cancellation! You look a lot like Dr. Lecter’s friend Dr. Graham. Are you related?” She didn’t seem particularly nosy. Just curious and making polite conversation while she tapped away at her keyboard.

“Yeah, we are,” he said, directing his charming smile at her. “Just got into town with my wards, and they’ve been through some things. I’m sorry, what was your name?”

She nodded sympathetically. “Dr. Lecter’s specialty is working with kids who have suffered trauma, so you’re in the right place. I’m Kate.” She offered her hand over her desk and shook his, the cold metal of her large rings pleasant against his skin, her many bangles and beads jangling on her wrist. Will was no expert in fashion, but he would bet her clothes were made of something like linen or hemp. “You’re checked in, so the doctor will be with you shortly.”

“Thanks,” he said, glancing around at the waiting room and moving to one of the adult-size chairs available, a comfortable thing upholstered in a cheerful yellow leather. No ominous paintings in this waiting room, no starved men on a raft in the sea. Instead, a beautiful impressionistic full-wall mural of animals so friendly looking that even a child with a phobia of any of the animals depicted might find it difficult to be frightened. They frolicked on a landscape that could only be a beautiful spring day, the vibrant green land beneath a calming blue sky dotted with white clouds.

A plaque on an adjoining wall identified the artist of the piece. He was astonished to find that the artist was Margot Verger. He supposed that she could have been a client of Hannibal’s in this world as well, during her adolescence. Perhaps he had encouraged her to paint rather than to kill her brother.

A door behind him clicked open, and he heard Hannibal’s voice. “Mr. Graham?”

Will stood and turned, allowing a small upturn of his mouth. “Dr. Lecter. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice.”

“Dr. Graham is a dear friend,” Hannibal said. “It’s no trouble at all.” He gestured for Will to enter his office before him, and Will obliged, walking slowly into a space that he could immediately tell would be comforting for children. It was entirely different from the huge space with high ceilings and high-end furnishings he had become accustomed to. The space was cozy and soft, a squishy green sofa and matching armchairs making up the furniture, with a doll house in the corner and a selection of coloring books, crayons, colored pencils, and colored markers on a coffee table. Additional toys were arranged on a shelf within easy reach. The lighting was indirect, using table lamps and wall sconces instead of harsh overheads. Through a half-door on the far wall, Will glimpsed a bookshelf and desk. Hannibal’s personal office space must be separate from his therapy room.

“Have a seat wherever you wish,” Hannibal invited.

Will sat in an armchair and Hannibal took the one opposite. A tiny bit of familiarity in what was, to Will, a bizarre environment.

He was unsurprised, after the waiting room, to find that Hannibal was different. Instead of a 3-piece suit, he wore brown-and-maroon-checkered trousers and a brown tweed blazer with leather elbow patches. His hair was free of product allowing it to flop onto his forehead in the way that Will had always absolutely adored. A pair of reading glasses hung on a lanyard around his neck in true old-lady-librarian style. The man looked like a quirky college professor, maybe.

He was fucking *adorable.*

It was possible that this man was not a serial killer. Will was a little bit speechless.

“How may I help you, Mr. Graham?” Hannibal asked, eyes genuinely kind. Like, Mr. Rogers levels of kindness.

Will cleared his throat uncomfortably. This man, he realized, was unlike any Hannibal he had known. He was suddenly aware that in this situation, Hannibal was the better person.

Hannibal was a good person sitting across from Will who was a serial killer.

Oh, fuck. What had he gotten himself into?

Moral Relativity

Chapter Summary

Welcome to the family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ab sat next to Mischa in front of a television, way bigger and brighter than the one his parents watched sometimes. They had a bowl of fruit cut into small pieces to share. Mischa was mesmerized by the show with puppets, but Ab was more interested in listening to the new Will's conversation in the kitchen. He could only hear Will's half, but that was okay.

"Morning Grayson," Will had said. "You got anything going on today?" A pause. "Uh huh. I'm hosting a couple of kids at the moment, about the same ages as your boys. Thought it might do them some good to meet each other, and we can talk business." Another pause. "Drop in anytime. Thanks, buddy."

About an hour later, the doorbell rang. Ab and Mischa had eaten half of the fruit and watched a few programs, so they were feeling a little sleepy, but that quickly changed when two kids ran into the room. The big one was a little bit taller than Ab was and the younger one was the same size as Mischa. "Hi!" the taller boy greeted. "I'm Isaac. Who are you?"

"My nickname is Ab," he provided. "This is my sister Mischa," he said as he gestured to his side. She stared at the other toddler with wide eyes, not used to spending much time with children her own age.

"Cool!" Isaac said. "My brother is Joey. Do you wanna color? I brought my books and pencils," he said as he shook his backpack.

"Okay," Ab accepted. He turned to his sister. "Ish, it's okay. Want to play with Joey?"

She nodded, hesitantly, and Ab brought her forward from where she had been hiding behind him.

It didn't take long before Mischa was giggling and playing games that Ab didn't understand, while he and Isaac colored pictures of jungle animals and people dressed in funny costumes.

After a few minutes, Isaac spoke up. "You part of the family now?"

Ab wasn't sure what that meant. He supposed he was kind of part of his Will's family, but he had only just met the people in this universe. "Don't know," he said with a shrug. "Are you Will's family?"

Isaac nodded. “Yeah, Uncle Will is my favorite uncle! He gives the best gifts and my dad says he’s the best boss ever.”

Ab nodded along. “Your dad works for the FBI too?”

Isaac looked at him, confused. “FBI? No way.”

“But he works for Will? Doesn’t Will work for the FBI?” Ab was suddenly nervous.

“Noooooo,” Isaac said with a frown. “Uncle Will and my dad are businessmen. We don’t like cops. We don’t tell cops we don’t like them, though. It’s a secret.”

—

“Mr. Graham?” Hannibal asked, a touch of concern in his voice. “Are you well?”

Will shook himself out of his stupor. “Yeah, sorry. I just…had an unsettling thought. Did Dr. Graham tell you anything about me?”

“Only that you would tell me some extraordinary things that I would not want to believe but are nonetheless true,” he said. “That you have become the guardian of some children who have experienced trauma,” he continued. “And he requested that I be honest with you. An unnecessary request, I assure you, but he does deal with a great many people less honest than I choose to be.” His sweet little smile and head tilt as he finished speaking gave Will butterflies in his stomach.

“Right. Okay,” Will said, clearing his throat. “I’m not sure where to begin.”

“Begin wherever you are comfortable,” Hannibal said, his voice soothing.

Best to just jump in, then? “I’m a dimension traveler, and I’ve known other versions of you in other universes.”

Hannibal looked surprised, but not disbelieving. “Very well. Please continue.”

“Do you mind if I ask how you know Dr. Graham?” Will asked, changing the subject.

“Dr. Graham has been invaluable in assisting me when my patients report that they have suffered abuse. I am very protective of my patients.”

That made sense, kind of. “The FBI doesn’t usually handle abuse cases,” Will observed.

Hannibal looked confused. “I suppose that is true. The entire law enforcement community is often less than successful at punishing child abusers. That is why I sought assistance from Dr. Graham. Please, if you would continue? I don’t wish to rush you, but my next appointment will arrive in approximately one hour.”

“Right! Sorry,” Will said, chagrined. “I was married to a version of you for several years, but that’s not important.” Hannibal’s facial expression seemed to disagree with Will’s assertion that his marriage to another Hannibal wasn’t important, but he stayed quiet. “The important

thing is that, several universes ago, I jumped into a clearing in the woods. There was a Soviet soldier carrying a little girl towards…well, let's just say his intentions weren't good. I rescued her, and her brother who was inside the cabin. The names of the children are Mischa and Hannibal Lecter."

Hannibal had completely frozen. "Excuse me?" he managed through barely-moving lips.

"Another version of yourself, at eight years old, and your sister, a healthy two year old. They're with Dr. Graham right now."

Hannibal exhaled, shakily. "Dr. Graham wouldn't be cruel, and he said I could trust this man" he seemed to say to himself in a whisper. "You are another universe's Will Graham?" he directed to Will. "Not a relative."

"Correct," Will confirmed.

"Mischa," Hannibal whispered. "You said that she is healthy?" he said more loudly.

Will nodded. "When I found her she was dehydrated and starving and had a cold. She recovered significantly in just a few days, and seems healthy, though admittedly I haven't been able to bring either of them to a doctor. We've been jumping from universe to universe, attempting to find a version of you I could trust."

Hannibal's eyes had been growing watery, but at the last part of his statement, he blinked his tears away. "A version of me you could trust?" he asked. "Surely you could trust any version of me with my sister." His voice had grown stern.

Will looked at him soberly. "The versions of you I've met until today were, to my knowledge, serial killers. I have no doubt that none of them would have harmed her, but Mischa and little Hannibal are kids. They need a healthy environment to grow up in. To me, that excludes a man who would raise them eating human meat."

Hannibal's breath caught. "I see," he whispered. "I understand how another version of me might have become…that."

"After my Hannibal lost his sister, he wandered the woods until he was placed in an orphanage for several years. He was found by his uncle eventually. I wonder what was different for you," he said gently.

Hannibal took a deep breath, then slowly exhaled. "It's a bit of a story," he said. "A man who looked a great deal like you appeared at the cabin and slaughtered the Soviet soldiers, but it was too late for Mischa. They had already…" he shuddered. "I had already discovered her fate. The man apologized for not finding me sooner. He escorted me to France, to my uncle, and he personally met with several psychotherapists before selecting one himself and securing my uncle's promise that he would send me for weekly sessions until I had worked through the trauma of my experiences. Dr. Graham reminded me of the man, who I knew as Liam. I felt I could trust him from the beginning. The same is true for you, I'm afraid."

Will was stunned. He didn't think it could have been him who helped this Hannibal. He didn't, as far as he knew, land in the same universe twice. He punched through the thin barrier between each universe successively, not reversing back towards his original universe. Each time he jumped, he got further away from his point of origin. "A man who looked like me. Do you believe he could have been a future version of me?"

Hannibal shook his head. "He appeared younger than you, not older. Less gray in his hair, if you'll forgive me for saying so."

Will's shoulders slumped in relief. As much as he wished he had the energy to rescue more of the child versions of Hannibal in the universes, it would inevitably involve meeting up with a great deal more adult versions already set in their ways as cannibalistic serial killers. And he was tired.

There was another version of him jumping dimensions. *That* was interesting.

"So, you aren't a serial killer," Will said. "And you're not a cannibal."

"I am not," Hannibal confirmed, looking pained. "I suffered from urges as a boy to do to others what was done to Mischa, but no, I was only guilty of cannibalism once."

Will watched Hannibal in emotional pain, his heart aching for the man. "You had no choice in that circumstance," Will said. "You can hardly be thought of as guilty." He cleared his throat and wiped a few stray tears from his cheeks. "When do you want to meet the kids? Should I bring them here, or will you visit Dr. Graham's place?"

—

"What do you mean, you don't work for the FBI?" When Will had arrived back at the house, Ab had filled him in on what the other little boy had told him. Will and Graham were having a conference at the kitchen table.

"Just that," Graham said with a shrug. "I don't." His face was blank.

"Why didn't you say something before?" Will asked, brows furrowed.

"The only time it came up was when you first popped into my house and kept asking if I worked for the FBI," he said. He had a point.

"Didn't you say you did? Wait, no. Shit. You didn't." Will wanted to bang his head against something. This Graham had reminded him so much of the Special Agent-in-Charge Graham that he'd *assumed* they were basically the same. "What do you do, then?" Will wondered. Hannibal had mentioned how helpful Graham had been in dealing with child abusers.

"You don't need to know that," Graham denied.

Will stared. "What is that supposed to mean? Aren't you supposed to make up a job title if your actual job is something secret?"

"You would know if I lied," Graham pointed out.

“Okay, fair,” Will admitted. “What’s the job title you tell other people?”

“I’m a businessman. Import/export. I’m also a philanthropist.”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake. You can’t be serious. Everybody knows that if someone tells you they’re an importer, they’re actually a spy or a drug smuggler or something. You couldn’t come up with something else?”

Graham shrugged. “It’s a common cover for good reason.”

Will wanted to laugh. If he wasn’t mistaken, Graham was some kind of fucking crime lord. “So where does Dr. Lecter fit into this?” Will asked. “You said you met him through work.”

“I send the kids of my staff, the kids who have problems, to Dr. Lecter. He’s the best, and he doesn’t discriminate against people like us.”

“What, importers?”

Graham shrugged. He did that a lot. “And in exchange, my people help him out with problems.”

Problems like child abusers. Hannibal worked with Graham to send hit men after child abusers. Will started to laugh. He relaxed, flopping back against his chair. “Oh, thank god,” he said, chuckling. “I thought I’d landed in some kind of freaky utopia where you and Hannibal were *good, law-abiding people* and I thought I was going to lose my mind. Holy shit. What a relief.”

Graham looked unhappy. “Not abiding by the law does not mean someone isn’t *good*,” he insisted. “Dr. Lecter is a good man, and so am I. Morality is relative. I only do bad things to bad people.”

Well, then. That brought back an old memory. “Huh,” Will said. “Yeah. Okay. I’m on board with that.”

He grinned at Graham until Graham’s unhappy face broke and he smiled back. This, he could do.

Chapter End Notes

Will could never be happy with a purely law-abiding Hannibal. That would be ridiculous. XD

Interlude: Things were different

Chapter Summary

Checking on some old friends from prior universes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dimension 4: Special Agents-in-Training Will Graham and Beverly Katz

"Who's a good boy?!" Bev crooned at Buster, making kissy faces and then pulling back out of reach when he went in with his tongue, laughing and scratching behind his ears. "Aww, Ellie, good baby girl," she said to her boyfriend's other dog. "Of course I didn't forget about you. You're the princess."

If Will was a normal guy, he might crack a joke about Bev liking his dogs more than she liked him. Will, delightfully odd as he tended to be, was just happy she liked his dogs so much. The fond smile he wore when watching her interact with them was abso-fucking-lutely adorable.

Once upon a time, Will had been the hot guy in class who was awkward enough that no one really knew how to talk to him. That hadn't stopped her, of course, and she was glad it hadn't. Because when he changed, when he began acting like he was comfortable in his own skin, *she* was who he asked out.

And if she'd thought he was hot while in class at the academy, seeing him without his clothes was a revelation.

Having thoroughly greeted the canine pals, Bev grinned saucily at Will and sat sideways in his lap on the couch she had strongly encouraged him to buy. "Who's a good boy?" she crooned in his ear, ruffling his hair. He laughed, kissing her neck.

"Mmm, you feel good," he said, pulling her more firmly against her second favorite part of him, which was perking up. "So gorgeous," he breathed against her jaw, making her melt.

—

Dimension 8: Will Graham and Miriam Lass

"Good morning, Miriam," Will greeted. "How's it going?"

Her laugh held a tinge of darkness he doubted had been present before her stay with Dr. Lecter. "I'm alive and not being held captive by a cannibalistic serial killer, so my morning is

going great. Yours?"

Will smiled as he shuffled a stack of files and locked them inside his desk drawer. "I'm trying out another new psychiatrist this evening," he said with clear resentment.

"What happened to the last one?" she asked as she straightened out her own desk off to the side of the room, unpacking a stack of graded student essays and stashing her bag underneath. Will had hired her as his assistant not long after she was released from psychiatric treatment following her unexpected reappearance in Dr. Lecter's house. It was a convenient arrangement, since it meant she could fill in as lecturer when he was pulled away for cases. Once he was cleared to be in the field again, of course *(somehow, Dr. Lecter's assurance of Will's field readiness no longer held any weight)*.

Miriam may not have completed FBI training, but she was more than qualified to teach. More qualified than Will was, to be frank, with her doctorate in criminology, graduate degree in psychology, several years in law enforcement, forensics fellowship, and ability to interact with students. Her position as his assistant was a stepping stone and a chance for her to find her feet. He would be surprised if she wasn't offered her own class to teach within a year.

"Same old bullshit," he admitted. "Another request to study me and publish of the results. Vague explanations as to why he couldn't clear me for fieldwork after I refused his request. I insisted to HR that they send me to an FBI psychiatrist this time instead of letting Jack choose again. He won't be happy, but clearly the only psychiatrists corrupt enough to agree to feed him information about what's going on in my head are also corrupt enough to hold field clearance hostage until I let them use me in a study."

"The things you learn about your idols," she said with a look of disgust on her face. "I'm almost glad I didn't graduate and end up working for him."

He nodded. "Not the best way to go about dodging that bullet, but I get your meaning." He set up his laptop and connected it to the projector as she took a seat at her desk.

"Yeah," she said with a chuckle. "Abduction by a serial killer gets a zero out of ten, do not recommend."

—

Dimension 12: Former Prisoner B 1327 - 1 Will Graham and Beverly Katz

Bev frowned. Will was moping again. She didn't begrudge him a good amount of moping. After all, he had only recently been released from a cell where he was surrounded by criminally insane people for several weeks, and then he didn't even get to witness the crazy Dr. Lecter being taken down.

Taken down by her, with an assist from Dimension Jumper. *That* had been a story.

Will hadn't believed Jack about the lookalike who disappeared into thin air once the situation had been handled. He'd believed her, though, if for no other reason than because he wanted to show her that *he* believed in what she said, unlike the rest of the FBI. He had forgiven her

for any doubts she'd had when everyone she knew was trying to convince her that he was a serial killer. It was hard to hold up under that sort of emotional pressure.

She had helped him retrieve and unpack his belongings once they were released from FBI evidence storage. Bev wasn't about to let him mope surrounded by cardboard boxes.

Instead, he moped on his bed in a room whose contents had been returned and appropriately arranged, laid out on his back with his eyes on the ceiling. The doggos were settled into their own beds, and she had been updating her anonymous blog with all of the dirt she could find on Freddie Lounds. That bitch needed to stop talking shit about her Will, and if Bev had to take Freddie down to make that happen, she would.

Was it unethical and illegal to use her FBI resources to dig up shit about Lounds and then post it online anonymously? Yeah, yeah it was. Did she care? Enough to use a VPN and as many tricks as she knew to keep the blog from being connected to her. Otherwise? No. The FBI didn't care much either as long as the blog wasn't connected to them. For years, Lounds had been like an annoying piece of furniture the bureau couldn't stop stubbing its toe on. Bev had some respect for her ruthless determination, but nothing excused the things she said about Will.

Closing her laptop, she stowed it away. Winding through the pups on the floor, in a few strides she had made it to the bed where she straddled Will's hips and smiled at him seductively. "What's on your mind, big boy?" she asked him. "Your face indicates Serious Thoughts."

Will sighed. "Nothing important. I just…god, I wish I could have gotten revenge myself, you know? I mean, it's good that things ended when they did. I would have never forgiven myself for saying anything about Lecter if you'd—" he shuddered "—if anything had happened to you. I think it's the lack of a final confrontation that's getting to me. That phase of my life feels incomplete, as fucked up as it was."

She leaned forward so her face was just inches from his. "Would you like me to describe in detail how I shot him and what those bullets did to his body?" she offered.

He shuddered again, and she felt him harden under her. "Now *that's* a kink," she said with smirk. "Is it murder in general or Lecter's murder in particular that's got you going?"

His breath shook as he exhaled. "Not…not murder. *You* with a gun in your hand," he said before swallowing. "*You* fighting for me. Christ, Bev, I know this thing between us was meant to be casual, but I'm pretty sure I'm in love with you." He closed his eyes, as if bracing for impact.

Bev kissed him on the mouth. "Good," she said. "I'm *certain* that I'm in love with you, but I'll accept 'pretty sure' from you for now."

His hands found her thighs and he squeezed them in silent gratitude, opening his eyes to meet hers. He lifted his head to press their lips together once again, and moaned when she shifted to increase the pressure on their groins. "I don't deserve you," he breathed, soft enough that he might have been talking to himself.

“You deserve me if I say you do,” Bev corrected. “Now, let’s get rid of some of these clothes, hm?”

—

Dimension 27: Teenage Will Graham and his father Bill Graham

Will and his pops drifted down the river in their boat, enjoying the breeze on what was a warm Louisiana day. Will held his fishing pole braced between his knees, held steady with his left hand. With his right, he wrote another essay for school.

“I got some scholarships for undergrad and grad school,” DJ had explained to him before leaving, “but I had to take out quite a few student loans and couldn’t justify taking on more debt to go back for a doctorate. You don’t have to go to school that long if you don’t want to, but your options shouldn’t be limited by how much debt you can stomach, so get as many scholarships as you can.”

Will had always been studious (it was pretty much the only thing he had going for him) but he had gone back to school with renewed determination.

He wanted to be law enforcement like DJ had been, like Will had been thinking about since he realized how good he was at reconstructing crimes in his head, but Will wanted respect that it seemed DJ had never been given despite his skills and knowledge. That meant getting a good education, and learning how to *wear masks* to fit in better with normal people.

“Don’t underestimate yourself,” DJ had said. “You have a lot more going for you than you know.” Then, he’d handed Will a cookie tin full of cash. Most of it wouldn’t be usable until several years in the future, but that was fine, since he was saving it.

He had also left a copy of his personal history with Hannibal Lecter, apparently a different version of Ab, but as an adult. It was a difficult read, because despite the rather clinical language used in the document, Will could feel how devastated DJ had been by everything that had happened.

Will would make sure things were different. For him *and* his pops, who had a few days before visited a doctor for a physical for the first time in years.

Chapter End Notes

I dedicate these short instances of Will/Bev to the lovely Maddie <3

Best Case Scenario

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Mischa meet at last.

Will seems to have misplaced his self-confidence.

“Okay, Ab. You ready for this?” Will asked, crouched a bit so he could meet the boy’s eyes more easily.

“This one isn’t the Chesapeake Ripper?” the boy checked.

“Right,” Will agreed. “This one lost his sister to the Soviet soldiers, but he got help before he became like the others.”

“Okay,” Ab said with a confident nod. “We’ll be safe around him.”

“I believe he would never hurt you,” Will confirmed. “Not you or Mischa.”

“Would he hurt you?” Ab asked, biting his lip.

“I don’t think so,” Will said. “But don’t worry about me, okay? I can take care of myself. I’ll be fine.” He turned to Mischa. “You okay, Mischa? You ready to meet grown-up Hannibal?”

She stared at him, curiosity sparkling in her bright eyes. She and Ab had chosen a cozy sweater, ruffled skirt, and leggings for her to wear that day. She likely didn’t understand much of what was happening in regards to the adult Hannibal, but that was okay. She was young enough that she probably wouldn’t even remember life before she met grown-up Hannibal, given a few years.

“Iba?” Mischa wondered, glancing at her brother, interested.

“Big Iba,” Will agreed.

“Hmm,” she replied, already distracted by a tiny spider crawling on the wall.

He chuckled. “Off we go.”

The three of them climbed into the cab for the ride to Hannibal’s office. Will and Hannibal had decided that it would be a neutral enough space, and the presence of toys and kids’ books might be a good distraction if one was needed. Besides, the cottage was a bright, friendly place. Will had no idea what this Hannibal’s home might look like, but he didn’t think it could be as cheerful as his office.

Before long, they had been dropped off and were making their way into the building, Mischa on his hip and Ab holding his free hand. The secretary greeted them with a kind smile and a soft “Go right in, he’s expecting you,” as she pulled on her jacket and lifted her handbag from a desk drawer. They had arrived after the last appointment of the day, for obvious reasons.

Will smiled at her in thanks as he lowered Mischa to the ground so she could stand on her own again. He accepted Mischa’s outstretched hand, took a deep breath, then stepped through the door, the little girl beside him and the miniature Hannibal behind.

—

Hannibal had been pacing from the couch in the therapy room to the bookshelf in his office and back again, the nervous energy uncharacteristic. His younger self and sister would arrive any moment, and he had been trying to imagine what he might say to them—his sister in particular—without much success.

He had trekked back and forth three more times when, just as he reached the threshold of his office, he heard the door from the lobby click open behind him. He held his breath, his body suddenly tingling all over, then cautiously turned.

He was just in time to catch a tiny Mischa as she flung herself at his knees.

“Tétis!” Mischa exclaimed.

“Mischa,” he whispered, lacing his fingers through her hair, the only part of her he could clearly see when her face was pressed to his pant legs. “Oh, sweet girl, please look at me.”

Her little head shook a refusal. “Tétis, kur tu nuėjai?”

How should he answer? He was not her father and had not gone anywhere, but how to explain in a way she might understand? His years of training were like a blank slate in his mind, not that it would have helped in what he suspected was an unprecedented set of circumstances.

“You do look like him,” the child version of himself said, voice quiet. “Like papa.”

He cleared his throat, but his voice still came out gravel-rough. “Yes, I suppose I do,” he agreed. “As will you.”

The boy shrugged one shoulder. Perhaps the thought of becoming so old seemed impossible or irrelevant to him. It was common for children to see adulthood that way. “Mischa?” he inquired of his sister in a gentle tone. The boy walked towards them, placing his small hands on Mischa’s smaller shoulders. “You okay?” he asked.

Hannibal had feared that Mischa was crying and suspected that the boy feared the same, but they needn’t have worried.

Mischa giggled. “Tétis!” she exclaimed again, tightening her hold around his legs.

Hannibal's breath trembled as she leaned back far enough to tilt her head up, exposing a brilliant smile to him for the first time. His chest ached, and tears of joy immediately filled his eyes. "My sweet Mischa," he whispered, cupping the side of her tiny face in one hand.

When she raised her hands up, a silent request to be picked up, he instead fell to his knees and wrapped the precious child in his arms, inhaling scents of pine trees, crayon wax, and vanilla.

The mental wound of her loss had long ago been stitched up with help from his childhood therapist, but only at that moment did it finally heal. A scar was still evident; nothing would ever change that he had lost his sister when he was a boy. But the miracle of having another Mischa, whole and healthy and joyful, in his arms soothed the raw edges of his soul like nothing else ever had.

His eyes had fallen closed as he held the little girl in his arms, but when he opened them and saw young Hannibal standing awkwardly nearby, he extended an arm in invitation. The boy accepted and joined in the embrace.

Mischa, trembling with excitement, seemed very happy between her brother and who she thought was her returned father.

"Play with us," she directed at Hannibal with another giggle and a bit of a bounce.

—

Will took a seat on one of the plush armchairs when Ab moved forward to support his sister. The emotions pouring out of all three Lecters were intense, and Will did a breathing exercise to help himself fortify his mind so he wouldn't become overwhelmed. Square breathing. In-two-three four. Hold-two-three-four. Out-two-three-four. Hold-two-three-four. Repeat. He imagined his mind protected from outside influence, and focused on his own emotions, holding on to them with determination.

When his exercise finished, he opened his eyes to the sight of the Lecter family in a group hug. It was *adorable* and a massive relief.

This Hannibal would take care of the kids, would protect them and give them the affection they needed. Will didn't have to worry about that.

He was less certain whether or not he had any place in their family. The kids certainly didn't *need* him. Neither did Hannibal.

He wouldn't abandon them, though. He would stick around until he was certain they were happy with Hannibal, and then he really should jump again. They didn't need the long-term influence of someone with so much blood on his hands. They would be better off without him. This Hannibal might have engineered the deaths of child abusers, but that was far different from the lives Will had taken, many of them innocent. He didn't know when his journey would end, but he was certain that he wouldn't be welcome to stay in this world very long, especially once they learned more about him. From the beginning, he had assumed that his journey would end in his death. He didn't deserve a happy ending.

He let the Lecter family separate from their embrace without rush after holding one another for quite a while. Mischa still held on to the man she presumably still believed to be her father, a content little smile on her face. After wiping tears from his eyes, the adult Hannibal looked at Will. He looked unsure, his near-invisible eyebrows furrowed and his lips pressed together. “You are…the three of you are staying with Dr. Graham,” he stated.

“Would you like the children to stay with you?” Will asked, anticipating the direction Hannibal was taking the conversation.

“Yes,” he agreed. “And you as well. You have been their only constant for many weeks now, correct? My home has guest bedrooms that I can easily make up for each of you. I could ask Dr. Graham to retrieve your belongings and bring them to my home,” he suggested.

Will didn’t know why that caught him off-guard. *Of course* Hannibal wouldn’t want to be parted from Mischa once he finally had her back again, and it made sense for Will to come along with them since he had been caring for them for a while. “Right, yeah, that’s fine,” he said, stumbling over his words. “Don’t worry much about me. Your normal guest accommodations will be more than sufficient, I’m sure. The kids have been sharing a room. It seemed best considering the…circumstances. But you’re the expert, so do what you need to do.”

Hannibal nodded. “Thank you, Will. I don’t know if I will ever be able to adequately convey what this means to me.”

Will fidgeted awkwardly. “You, uh, you’re welcome. It’s…well. It was the least I could do. I couldn’t leave them.”

“You could have left them in any of the worlds between then and now, but you did not. You sought a world where they could be safe. You have my gratitude.”

Will blushed. “I’m just glad we found this world,” he admitted, avoiding Hannibal’s eyes. “Found you. You’re the…I think you’re probably the best case scenario for these guys. They’ll be okay with you. They’ll grow up the way they should.”

Hannibal’s face had relaxed into one of the genuine smiles that always made Will’s heart feel like it was bursting at the seams. “I hope you will stay with us, Will. They will benefit most from the presence of both of us, I think.”

Will found himself tugging on a few strands of his hair a little bit, an old nervous habit, eyes flickering between Hannibal’s face and the surroundings. “We should talk about that…later,” he suggested.

No way would this Hannibal want him around the kids after that conversation.

He would just try to enjoy the time he had left with the kids and this world’s Hannibal and Graham. If the multiverse was merciful, he wouldn’t have to live without them for long.

The Other Jumper

Chapter Summary

We meet and learn the story of the mysterious Liam who rescued our new-and-improved Hannibal as a kid.

And we check in with Geologist Will and his helpless big brother FBI Will.

William Graham, as he rotted away in the dungeons of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, had crafted a plan.

It had been far-fetched, to say the least. Almost certainly impossible. There had been nearly no chance it could ever come to fruition.

He had been sentenced to life imprisonment, though, so it wasn't as if he had been wasting precious time. Time had been his only commodity back then, and his mind his only refuge.

Retreating to his stream and the woods around it, to his mental recreation of his farm house, had been his preferred method of escaping the abuses of prison. Chilton hated his unwillingness to submit to his *treatment*. Mentally terrorizing William, Chilton thought, might break him.

A guard had once seen him scratching at his cell wall with his fingernails. He had only been fidgeting but, admittedly, he had scratched the paint. The "incident" had been the excuse Chilton needed to label him an escape risk.

He was moved into a new cell two or three times a week with a brand new strip search each time. The explanation was that leaving him in one cell for too long would allow him to "work on" it. *Yes,* he thought, *I will use my nails to claw my way through the concrete and out into the world.* His nails, in truth, broke under mild pressure. They were fragile from nutritional deficiency.

The most trying times were probably when things he said to Chilton were wrongly interpreted as evidence that he was suicidal. That, without fail, left him with his prison-issued jumpsuit, t-shirt and shorts confiscated and replaced with the straitjacket and muzzle. The cherry on top was the stay in a padded suicide watch cell in which he had no sink, toilet, or bed and the lights stayed on 24 hours a day.

The cold from wearing only a straitjacket combined with the buzzing of the lights in those cells was almost worse than the beatings he received from bored or angry orderlies.

After three years of William suffering abuse at the hands of his jailers, Hannibal had finally decided that he liked William better out of prison than in. He had killed the judge who had

sentenced William to life in the BSHCI, piercing his flesh with fish hooks in flies nearly identical to the ones that had resulted in William's conviction, down to the human remains from the copycat's victims.

The justice system had found itself with no choice but to overturn his conviction.

William wondered if Hannibal comprehended that William hadn't had the protection of being wealthy, of paying for comfortable accommodations and bribing the administration for fair treatment. He wondered if Hannibal truly believed he could ever forgive him for putting him through such hell.

William Graham had become part of the world once more, but life as he knew it was long gone. His dogs had been re-homed. His house and car had been sold, his bank account emptied, and every penny given to the families of the people he had supposedly killed.

Emerging from the *hospital*, the only thing he'd had left to lose was the beating of his own heart.

He used the cab fare given to him by the hospital to travel to a certain house on Chandler Square. He sat shivering on the front steps until after he had seen a particular Bentley cross the intersection at the end of the street, headed to the alleyway behind the buildings. When the lights inside flickered on, he politely knocked on the door.

"Hello, William," Hannibal had greeted him with a neutral expression, a little bit older but largely unchanged. Hannibal had spent the past three years living his life as he pleased, eating what he wished, not being constantly abused and psychologically terrorized.

William despised him.

William was also a mirror who could empathize with people so thoroughly that he temporarily became them. He was uniquely suited to carry out his plan. He had already arranged his face to read as *dejected but slightly hopeful*.

"Hello, Hannibal."

—

He had played a long game. It had been a careful seduction replete with tests from Hannibal. He had mirrored Hannibal's own monster for a time, and Hannibal had been practically starry-eyed.

He had ignored Jack Crawford's every attempt to contact him. His entire world had revolved around Hannibal. He had given Hannibal no reason to doubt him. No reason to suspect.

They had been married in a *relatively* small ceremony two years after his release.

When Hannibal had some months later died in a *tragic accident*, during which William had been publicly visible on the other side of town, he had played the part of a grieving husband. And then he had liquidated his and Hannibal's assets and packed currency, gold, and diamonds in a hiking pack.

Dimension jumping hadn't been part of the plan he had carefully dreamed up while incarcerated, but the possibility had niggled at his mind after hearing rumors of missing persons who vanished after commissioning expensive devices from brilliant scientists.

The money he won in his lawsuit against the FBI hadn't been needed for living expenses, not after he had pointedly invited himself to move into Hannibal's house. He had decided that spending it on a mystery device that might kill him or might take him to another world was a great idea, and some ambitious MIT graduates had been happy to help him risk his life.

After preparing his hiking pack, he had retrieved the device from a safety deposit box. He hadn't been worried that it might not work. A failure could mean death, but it could also mean a complete failure to do anything at all, leaving him in his own dimension. As a free man, he could travel his own world, even if he couldn't travel through dimensions.

If he died, he wouldn't care about anything any longer.

If it *did* work as intended, the Hannibal Lecters of other worlds might just find themselves at William Graham's mercy.

—

His favorite worlds were those in which he could completely disrupt Hannibal's structured life with a series of engineered misfortunes, usually ending with his imprisonment or death in the same sort of *tragic accident* that had befallen his dearly departed husband. He did prefer the imprisonment option, especially when he was successful in sabotaging the man financially by cutting him off from the funds he had in offshore accounts. He couldn't buy himself preferential treatment without any money. It helped that Hannibal was reliably consistent and used the same passwords and access procedures William's husband had.

Many people claimed that the best revenge was living well, but he believed that living well while also subjecting Hannibal Lecter to prison in as many universes as possible was the best revenge in his own situation.

In some worlds he visited, he appeared on top of a grave. He had been warned that might happen, since the strands of hair he used to direct his device weren't as accurate as some other materials that might have been used. Materials that would have been suspicious for him to collect from his *dear husband's* corpse after his *accident* like flesh, bone, and blood.

In some cases when he found himself in proximity of a dead Hannibal instead of a living one, the man had been murdered, sometimes in amusing ways, sometimes violently. He hadn't thought much of it, at first, because it was completely understandable that other people would prefer the man dead. Unhinged patients, slighted opera groupies, serial killers sensing competition—he could think of plenty of people who might want to kill Hannibal, even before discovering him to be a cannibalistic serial killer.

But then, some of the Will *(worlds where he was William were rare)* Grahams that he ran into began mistaking him for someone else. "Will! You came back?" one of his other selves would say. And after speaking with them, he wondered if there might be another explanation for the already-dead Hannibals.

It was convenient to not have to explain his situation, once he explained that he wasn't *quite* who they thought he was. They assumed his situation was the same as the dimension jumper they had met previously, and he generally didn't contradict them. He suspected the other dimension jumper's modus operandi and aims were different from his own, but it hardly mattered. Those who "recognized" him tended to treat him well, because their previous visitor had done well by them. It was actually kind of nice.

He did wonder who the other one might be. He, himself, tended to leave the married-and-cohabiting Will and Hannibal pairs he found alone, preferring to let the local Will continue with his own plans. His other selves, he found, were frequently unhappily biding their time or working their way through long games of their own. Even the ones who had clearly been with the other man for years and were more than aware of his hobbies tended to exude an aura of *not quite satisfied.* But when you were on the run and living under an assumed name side-by-side with Hannibal the Cannibal, what options did you really have? How did *that* relationship end once you realized it wasn't working for you anymore?

With death, obviously. Hannibal's or Will's, preferably Hannibal's.

And in worlds with sufficiently advanced technology, dimension jumping seemed, to him at least and evidently to at least one other version of himself, the most logical escape hatch. With any luck, an escape into worlds where his counterparts were free men, so he wouldn't be hunted and nearly-arrested by law enforcement or nearly-kidnapped-or-killed by hired thugs or hit men.

(Those worlds got annoying, fast.)

So, the other could be any of several versions of himself he had let be to deal with their Hannibal as they saw fit. Perhaps the *other* he had heard about was actually several others. It was hard to say.

Before long, he began calling himself Liam. It was the easiest way to distinguish himself from all of the Will-not-Williams he tended to meet, and it made interacting with people who knew the local version of himself a little less awkward. None of that "Hey Will, no, the other one," sort of confusion.

He liked to really dig in when he arrived in a new universe. Money talked, and he had plenty of it to establish himself in each world he decided to play in. Identification, passports, credit cards—he had gotten very, very good at making or commissioning the papers necessary to function in modern society. He usually didn't even have to spend the money he brought with him on his documents, since he knew how to access Hannibal's accounts, and the man didn't actually monitor his numbered Swiss bank accounts that closely.

He had been traveling for several years before he came across a child Hannibal. It was, unfortunately, shortly after his sister had been killed and eaten. Not for the first time, Liam had wondered whether it was bad luck or if there actually was some kind of guiding force dropping him into places in time at a specific moment.

It was an opportunity he'd never had before, to do what he could to make Hannibal grow into a functional human. He rescued the child and took him to France, establishing him in the

home of his aunt and uncle. He carefully screened psychologists and therapists until he found one he believed could best help Hannibal, and then he established a trust to pay for several years of weekly therapy for the boy.

He stayed with the family for long enough to satisfy himself that young Hannibal would be treated well and would receive the therapy he needed. And then he moved on.

There was no shortage of worlds out there for him to meddle with.

In only the best ways, of course.

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Dimension 29 - Geologist Will and his bro FBI Will

Will swam towards consciousness, the steady beeping of the hospital machines overlaid by two annoyed voices. His stomach sank when he heard Jack's voice. The man was probably there to show him pictures of dead people, if not drag him out of bed and to a crime scene.

"Who do you think you are?" Jack was saying.

"His brother," a younger-sounding version of his voice claimed. "Who do you think *you* are?"

"Will doesn't have a brother," Jack said with certainty.

"Correction. Will *didn't know* he had a brother until very recently."

"How could he *not know he had a brother?*" Jack asked, audibly incredulous.

"Isn't it obvious?" the other Will said. "When mom left him with dad, she didn't know she was pregnant."

There was a beat of silence. Then, "Fine, but I need to see him."

"For what?" the other Will said, and Will wondered if Jack could hear the dangerous note in his voice.

"We have a case and we need him." Jack's voice was stubborn.

"Oh *hell* no," the other Will said. "Security! Escort this man away from this room, please! Nurse! Add whoever this guy is to the banned visitors list! Please and thank you, you're the best!"

Jack complained loudly as he was, evidently, escorted away. Will just stared at the ceiling, flabbergasted.

Light from the hallway briefly illuminated his room as the door was opened, then closed. Soft footsteps approached his bed, then the visitor chair creaked. "You heard that, then?" the other Will asked.

Will cleared his throat. “Uh, yeah, thanks for scaring him away. Not really in the mood for corpses.” He looked at his younger self. “The math doesn’t add up, you know. Mom left when I was really small. You’re at least 5 years younger than me.”

The other rolled his eyes. “He doesn’t need to know that. And I’m pretty sure it’s closer to ten.”

“Did you grow up with dad?” Will asked.

“Nope,” the younger man said, popping the ‘p’ in the word. “I could tell you did because of all the fishing stuff at your house. Dad died before I knew him, but mom told me about the fishing. Plus you’re a fed, and there’s no way that would have happened if mom was around.”

Will’s heart thudded, a heavy feeling in his chest. “You…you grew up with mom.”

“No choice,” he admitted. “She was gonna leave me with dad but then he died in a boating accident, so she had to take me along.” His voice sounded indifferent.

That accident had happened in his world too, but his pops had managed to escape. “Was it nice, growing up with her?”

“It was interesting,” he admitted. “Mom was a real free love hippie type, so we drove around in her bus. Settled down for a few years so I could go to high school, but we lived in a partially-converted barn. It had a lot of shag carpet but no plumbing, except a spigot outside, and electricity was from a generator that was usually out of fuel.”

“Huh. Is she…was she still alive when you left?”

“Yeah, she was around. Mostly sending post cards from her travels. Nepal and India lately. She’ll be sad when they tell her I got crushed in a mine, but it can’t be helped. Hazard of the job and all that. Wish I could tell her where I really am,” he said with a sad smile. “She’d totally dig this multidimensional travel thing, plus in this world she might not be banned from Nevada.”

There was a beat of silence.

“…banned from? Nevada? What, the entire state?”

“It’s a long story,” he said with a grin.

“I’ve got time,” Will pointed out, gesturing at his hospital-gowned form and the surrounding machinery.

“Well, this one time…”

Laying It All Out

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal is a happy not-cannibal.
>
> Our boys fall into familiar roles, Hannibal as therapist and Will as the one baring his soul.
>
> Things are looking up and up and up.

Hannibal, for the first time in many years, felt *happy*.

It wasn't that he had spent the years in between in a depression. He had been content, usually. Lonely, more often than he would have preferred. Quietly seething in anger, occasionally, though his dear friend Graham was extremely helpful in fixing the *problems* that caused those particular episodes.

But *happiness* was rare, something to be treasured.

He had never before received such precious gifts as he had the previous day: a young-parallel-turned-son and a beloved-sister-turned-daughter.

He could not fathom how he could possibly repay Will, who was both similar to and so unlike the Will Graham he knew. It was clear to Hannibal that Will had been traumatized many times in his past, having clearly suffered abuses and tragedies unknown to Hannibal. He was world-weary and wary, and if Hannibal wasn't mistaken, spent a great deal of his time berating himself for past sins. It was evident in the way his face scrunched and breathing changed in quiet moments. The way the muscles in his jaw betrayed its clenching. The way he sometimes couldn't look at him or the children, as if convinced he shouldn't be allowed. All of these tells, after a few meetings and one evening of closer acquaintance.

Of course, Hannibal's specialty was in treating trauma, which made him uniquely qualified to spot tell-tale indications that a person without training would not notice. At a surface level, Will was not that dissimilar to the local version of himself. He read primarily as confident and alert, quick to offer humorous quips. An introvert who, with lifelong practice, could wear the mask of an extrovert when the situation called for it. Will, if he was right, wore many masks.

Whatever the sins in his past, he believed that Will was a person he could enjoy knowing.

"Good morning," he said with a smile as a rumpled Will appeared in the kitchen entry. He was exceptionally attractive with his hair in such disarray. "Please, have a seat. Breakfast will

be ready soon and there is coffee in the carafe." He gestured at the tray in the middle of the informal kitchen dining table.

"Thanks," the sleep-rough voice said in response. Hannibal shivered, delighted to host the man at his table and in his home for more than one reason.

"You are most welcome," Hannibal said. "I hope you don't mind scrambled eggs and sausage. I thought to make something simple that will be familiar to the children."

A wistful look flickered over Will's face, then a frown followed by a deliberate softening of his features. Whatever the cause of his reaction, he did not wish to make an issue of it. "That sounds great, Dr. Lecter, thank you," he said calmly.

"Hannibal, please," he insisted.

"Hannibal," Will said softly, the same wistful look once again coming over him before it was suppressed. "The kids will like it, the eggs and sausage. They tolerate mine, and I suspect you're a much better cook."

"That's kind of you to say," Hannibal responded, a tiny smile curling the edges of his mouth. He ducked his head and returned to the sausage rounds, flipping them to brown on the other side before scattering some fresh herbs into the nearly-done eggs. He turned off the gas to that burner so the eggs could finish setting.

Hannibal could feel Will's eyes on him as he cooked, until the children arrived and his focus shifted.

"Morning, kids," Will greeted. Hannibal glanced over his shoulder quickly enough to catch the sweet smile on the other man's lips. The children still wore their pajamas, rubbing their eyes and yawning. They mumbled some variations of 'morning' in return, but they were obviously very sleepy. Hannibal wasn't surprised. He had checked on them several times in the night, indeed he couldn't help himself, and the two had been restless and whispering until the early morning hours.

"How are the both of you this morning?" Hannibal asked, while Will stood to assist Mischa into her booster seat. He had, admittedly, coped with some of his overwhelming feelings after his first meeting with Will by partaking in what most called *retail therapy*. Whatever the helpful sales associate told him he might require for care of a toddler, he had purchased, and Graham had provided him with the clothing sizes.

"Fine," young Hannibal said. Will had called him Ab the day before, and he would need to ask about that. The child, he suspected, answered something along the lines of "fine" every time he was asked such a question. Probably a habit he picked up from Will.

"Hungry," Mischa said with a sigh.

Hannibal's chest tightened and he felt the tingling rush of panic swelling. Hearing *that word* in *her voice* after so many years. That it was said in English this time made little difference. He turned his face back to the stove as he closed his eyes and exhaled, then stopped breathing

for several seconds. He inhaled, held his breath, then deliberately swallowed three times. He repeated the exercise. He could vaguely hear Will telling Mischa the food would be ready soon.

('Iba, I'm so hungry. Please, is there any food? Where are mama and papa?' She had repeated variations of those over and over until she was too weak to speak. She had gone mostly silent by the time the men had taken her from him.)

"You okay, Hannibal?" Will asked, concern in his voice.

"Minor flashback. A moment, please." He held tight to the handle of the oven door, grounding himself. It had been many years since his PTSD had acted up to such an extent, the episodes rare after he took part in EMDR therapy while it was still considered experimental. It was a therapy he began providing to his own patients once he became a psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

"Let me know if you need help with breakfast?" Will's voice was questioning, like he wasn't sure if offering assistance would be welcome.

"Thank you," Hannibal said, forced to leave it at that, unable to form additional words at that moment. He blinked several times, focusing on his name, the time, and his location, consciously relaxing tense muscles. It felt like ages had passed, but it hadn't even been two minutes.

He continued his breathing exercises as he finished cooking breakfast, the familiar routine a comfort. He felt much better, only slightly tired, by the time he plated the food and served it to his…

His family. He blinked, and that time, the new tingling he felt coursing throughout his body was not a symptom of panic.

The kids immediately dug in, obviously happy with the food. He was extremely pleased. Eventually they would need to polish their manners, but company manners weren't necessary with family. Hannibal took a seat at the round teak table with his own plate. He glanced around at the faces of his companions, all content, and made a mental note to purchase place mats for Mischa, to make cleaning up easier in the future.

Will, having taken a bite of sausage, looked at him strangely, eyebrow raised. "This is delicious, but I don't recognize the meat." He seemed to be fighting a smile. Hannibal suddenly recalled two things:

1. Will told him that he had never met an adult Hannibal Lecter before himself who was not a cannibalistic serial killer.
2. Will had also told him that he had been married to a Hannibal Lecter.

Leading him to conclude that:

3. Will had been married to a cannibalistic serial killer and was more than likely familiar with such a diet. Had perhaps been unknowingly (knowingly?) served such by his husband. Was

amused by another version of his husband feeding him meat he did not recognize?

He cleared his throat.

“No, I don’t suppose you do, as it is not meat,” he said carefully. “The base ingredients that give it its texture are lentils, oats, flaxseed, and mushrooms. By adding the usual sausage seasonings, I am able to approximate the appropriate taste to complement the texture. That is something I meant to speak with you about, Will, in case you bring home groceries. This is a strictly vegetarian household. I apologize for any inconvenience.”

Will looked at him with a touch of surprise followed by dawning realization and understanding. “Of course,” he agreed. “I’m guessing I shouldn’t bring home any faux-meat, either?” he said with a soft smile. “Since you make your own.” He gestured to the sausage on his plate with his fork.

“I do,” Hannibal agreed. “I prefer to make everything myself when possible. I will introduce you to the rest of the kitchen so you have a better idea of the ingredients and tools available. I won’t begrudge you and the children processed foods you are particularly fond of, provided no meat is brought into the house.”

Control over food was an impulse he had found unnecessary to change thus far in his life, and he hoped that it would not be the thing to scare Will away.

Will nodded his agreement. “I know my way around a kitchen, if you need any help. Going from feeding one to regularly feeding four is a change.”

“A welcome change, I assure you,” Hannibal insisted. “In truth, it will please me greatly to provide food for all of us. Nonetheless, thank you for your offer, Will. Sometimes another pair of hands is extremely useful.”

“I like to help, too,” young Hannibal interjected.

“The kids like to cook too,” Will agreed, the corner of his mouth twitching in amusement. “Pouring blueberries in the pancake batter, tearing up lettuce, that kind of thing.”

“Wonderful,” Hannibal said, swallowing to avoid embarrassing himself with an excessive show of emotion. “I will be honored to have the assistance of you and your sister as well,” he said, meeting eyes with young Hannibal, who watched him with curiosity. He knew it to be impossible, but at that moment he felt like his heart was increasing in size. How could he have been so fortunate? He had long ago given up the thought of raising children of his own, glad to protect, heal, and teach each young one given into his care for an hour each week. His work was rewarding, and he had never quite regretted not having children.

Now, though, he was already finding fulfillment in protecting, healing, and teaching a family of his own, despite having only just met them.

That wasn’t precisely accurate, though, was it? He could remember who he was at eight years old, before his sister had been taken from him. Could remember approximately how his mind worked then, what he had been interested in. His sister, he had never forgotten. She lived in

both his dreams and his mind palace, and the Mischa now at his table believed he was her father returned. She was already completely comfortable with him.

Then, there was Will. The Will Graham he had known for years was someone he trusted entirely. He knew *that* man quite well. However, he wasn't as comfortable applying his familiarity with *him* to the Will in front of him. The children were largely unformed. The majority of experiences that would shape their lives were yet to occur, and it seemed that their early experiences were the same as or similar to his own, diverging only when they were rescued by Will.

Will had lived a life of several decades on a track different from that of Dr. Graham. His experiences were largely a mystery, and as to how they had formed him, he had only his observations to fuel his guesses.

Given the proclivities of his own other-dimensional selves and the fact that they became what he had been able to resist becoming, the relative morality of someone in one universe did not necessarily dictate the relative morality of their other-dimensional selves.

Will might not be at all like his friend Graham beyond the superficial. He suspected that to be the case, in many ways. He had protected the children, though. Had gone through significant trouble to deliver them to safety. Those were not the actions of someone with an antisocial personality, nor someone uncaring.

They would need to talk.

On one hand, he felt that he should be on his guard.

On the other, he wasn't sure that he minded whatever sins Will had committed in the past, if he was willing to assist him in his protection and care of the children. The children were safe in his household with his protection, but they were even safer when Will was present as well. He felt in his bones that Will was a protector.

—

"Tell me about your Husband," Hannibal said that evening, the children upstairs in their room no doubt whispering to each other. His interactions with them throughout that day had led him to believe that they were enjoying their new living situation, but they had been through a great deal of change and it would no doubt take time to process. That they had one another to lean on would be beneficial as they healed and grew.

Will exhaled in a rush, then took a deep breath. "What do you want to know?"

"You mentioned that you had never met an adult Hannibal Lecter who wasn't a cannibalistic serial killer, before finding me. Is that true for--"

Will cut him off with a chuckle, then looked apologetic. "Yeah, that includes my husband. And yes, I knew what he was before I ran away with him."

Hannibal sat in silence for a moment, deciding which direction he would take. “Why did you run away with him?”

“I didn’t think that’s what I was doing, at the time,” he said with a huffed laugh. “I pulled him off of a tall cliff into waves pounding against the rocks, and we were both badly injured already. He had been shot, and I was losing a lot of blood,” he touched the scar on his cheek. “Thought that would be the end, for sure.”

“Suicide? Why.” His voice was nonjudgmental. He had defaulted to therapy mode.

“The world would have been better off without him, and I was the necessary sacrifice. He didn’t fight me pulling him off of the cliff because I was coming with him. And at that moment, I thought the world would be better without me too. My wife and son would be safer. I didn’t like what I’d become. What he’d made me become.” He bared his teeth in a mockery of a smile.

“What was that?”

“Someone who could see beauty in death.”

“That is something many have done,” Hannibal pointed out. “There are beautiful works of art depicting and invoking death. The death of all living things is a universal guarantee, and our culture’s fear and disgust when contemplating death is, arguably, unhealthy.”

“Someone who could see beauty in killing,” Will corrected himself.

“Ah,” Hannibal said before pausing a moment. “Who did you kill?”

Will was visibly tense, and avoiding making eye contact. “Before running away with Hannibal, I killed a handful of serial killers, more or less sanctioned by my employers at the FBI.”

“And after.”

“I didn’t participate at first. For years, I told him that if he was going to continue his *hobby*, he needed to keep it out of our home. I wanted nothing to do with it. At some point, he started to bring me *case files* he had assembled about people he was stalking. A murderer who bought his way out of prison time, the guy who ran an abusive puppy mill until he got shut down but saw no punishment save a fine, a serial rapist the police were having trouble pinning for any specific crime. People he thought I might approve of killing.”

“And you did.”

“Eventually, I did. I thought, well, I can’t do any good for the FBI or any official law enforcement. Maybe I could do some good in ways they couldn’t get away with. And it was all so *normalized* by then, you know? I don’t fault him entirely for what I am, but his grooming of me began when I was vulnerable to influence, mentally unstable, and he was my psychiatrist. He did everything he could to craft me into his *equal*.”

“So, vigilantism.”

“More or less,” he said with a shrug. “And after he died, after *I killed him*, was when I started jumping dimensions.”

“Why did you kill him, aside from the obvious?”

“It probably sounds stupid considering my tacit approval of his other activities, but I warned him that if he cheated on me, that’d be it for us. We’d be finished.” He glared into the middle-distance for a moment, lips pressed together. “He decided to test me, the day I killed him and left. He sent the woman he’d been fucking to kill me. Expected that one of us would die, and the winner would be good enough to stay with him for a little while longer, I guess? I stopped her, patched her up and sent her away to drive herself to the hospital for some stitches. Hannibal and I had a frustrating exchange about his bullshit tests. The rage in me exploded. I had been contemplating it already, but at that point I decided I was done, and cut him open. Held him while he bled out. He probably liked it, to be honest.” He smirked darkly, his hand reflexively gripping the arm of the chair in which he sat.

“And since you have been traveling, who have you killed?”

“Mostly I killed whatever Hannibal Lecter I found. And I killed the witnesses who saw me kill him, if there were any. I can’t have them pointing their finger at the local Will Graham. They’re the ones I’m trying to help by preventing Hannibal from getting tangled up in their lives and minds. I’m trying to *prevent* their lives being ruined. I can’t be the cause of their imprisonment. That would be…devastating.”

“You are a protector. It is a good trait to have.”

“The families of the witnesses I killed probably don’t see it that way. They were innocent. Just in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Will stared at a sculpture of birds of some kind that sat on a bookshelf. Those deaths were the ones that sat most uncomfortably in his gut. He had been so intent on his mission, and so expectant that he would be killed before very long, that it had felt like nothing mattered. Nothing truly had mattered, not to him, until he had appeared at the edge of that clearing to watch Mischa being carried to her death.

“No, I don’t suppose they do. Even so, killing a serial killer and even one or more witnesses is net positive. The fewest number of people who could have died did so under your machinations. The numerous families of the victims whose deaths you prevented will never even know they have you to be grateful for.”

“You’re oddly calm about this,” he said, pulling his gaze away from the bird sculpture and meeting Hannibal’s eyes. He had been actively blocking out any emotions coming from the other man. He hadn’t wanted to feel his horror and distrust. “I thought for sure you would be furious and kick me out as soon as we had this conversation. Unless, of course, you’re calmly furious and will be doing that soon,” Will observed.

“I’m certain you are familiar with the trolley problem. You will likely be unsurprised that I would not find it a great mental burden to decide to steer my tram onto the track where it would kill the fewest number of people, or if I had knowledge of them, the worst people. I believe in doing the most good that I can, Will. Sometimes, doing good requires making difficult decisions, and while I avoid taking active part in the *balancing of the scales* for the

sake of my own mental health, I recognize the necessity." He paused. "Have you killed anyone in this universe?"

Will's head was spinning a little bit. Was Hannibal really saying what he thought he was saying? "No, no need."

"Avoid doing so without good reason, and I see no reason we can't get along very well. You are a good protector for the children. Between the both of us, they should be safe."

Will cleared his throat. "I thought I would help them settle in, then move on," he said with honesty. "I thought they would be better off without my influence."

Hannibal seemed to be carefully thinking through his next words. "If you wish to leave for your own sake, to continue your travels, I will not stand in your way. If you wish to leave for the sake of the children, I find that unnecessary. I would like you to stay. I would," he paused, tilting his head and staring at Will until Will met his gaze, "enjoy getting to know you better."

Someday

Chapter Summary

Fluff. Lots of fluff. Nothing bad happens in this chapter.

Little glimpses into daily life with the kids.

Will makes a meaningful gesture.

"How do you feel about going to school, Ab?" Hannibal inquired over a delicious dinner of marinated crispy tofu, wide rice noodles, and vegetables from the Farmer's Market.

The boy froze. "You're sending me away?" he asked.

"Away? No, of course not," Will replied, surprised. "Why would…*oh,* yeah, no."

"For day school only," Hannibal specified. "You would leave for school each morning and return each afternoon."

"Your other option is home schooling with online classes. You'd meet people your own age at day school," Will added. "Do we even have boarding schools in America?"

Ab nodded as Hannibal said "Yes, several hundred of them."

"Huh. Guess that's not something they share with the poor kids. Or maybe my universe didn't have them." He shrugged. "How did you learn about them, then?" Will directed to Ab.

The boy shrugged, mimicking Will's body language. "Wikipedia."

That made Will grin wide. "One of the very best features of the internet, in my universe as well."

"Ab, how do you feel about school?" Hannibal repeated, steering the conversation back onto its original path.

The boy examined both men, then glanced at his sister.

"You know we wouldn't let anything happen to Mischa, right?" Will asked. "She's too little to go to school, but I'm not working. I can protect her while you're away."

Ab seemed to deflate, muscles Will hadn't realized were tense finally relaxing. "I would like to try day school," he admitted. "Can I try the other kind if I don't like it?"

“Of course,” Hannibal said. “We have been collecting information about schools in the area. We would like you to look through them and give your opinion.”

Ab’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “Oh. Okay,” he agreed.

At that, Mischa finally stopped daydreaming and decided she was unhappy without anyone’s attention being focused on her. “Okaa*aaa*aay,” she said in an out-of-tune sing-song, repeating the last word Ab had said. She banged her sippy cup once on the rubberized place mat they had begun using at her seat, the small droplets of water flying from the mouthpiece resembling tiny glittering diamonds in the light.

Will chuckled. “You doing okay there, Mischa?”

“Oka*aaa*aaa*aaay*,” she sang again, offering a big toothy smile.

Will noticed Hannibal’s eyes were teary again, as they often were when Mischa acted like a happy child. “Yep,” Will agreed. “We’re all okay.”

—

Will reclined against a decorative pillow stolen from the sofa, cuddling a giggling Mischa next to him on the family room’s plush area rug. “So the little girl walked through the park, calling out for her dragon,” he read. “Where do you think he is, Mischa?” he asked her.

“The lake!” she said, squirming in excitement.

“Oooh, I think you might be right,” he said. Sure enough, on the next page, the princess heard her dragon roar followed by the startled quacks of many ducks and deduced that she should head towards the lake. It was, of course, Mischa’s favorite book for the moment. She had the entire thing memorized.

“Whoops,” he said, looking at the mantel clock above the fireplace. “We’ve gotta go pick up your brother. We have five minutes to put our coats and shoes on.”

“Iba!” she exclaimed. “No homework!” Will believed that she didn’t mind spending the days with Will (and sometimes Hannibal, when one of the appointment slots on either side of his lunch hour was unfilled). What made her unhappy was getting her brother back only for him to tell her that he had to do homework and couldn’t play.

“Hopefully no homework,” Will agreed. Elementary school kids shouldn’t even have homework, he thought. They should be doing their worksheets in class where the teacher could answer their questions. But Ab seemed to be enjoying the experience, which surprised Will not at all. The kid was a miniature Hannibal after all, not a miniature Will. A miniature Will would have opted for homeschooling one hundred percent.

—

“What’s this?” Will asked after being handed a bulky black pouch. He unzipped the top and began looking through the contents.

He was having coffee with Graham so the kids could play with Graham's minion's kids, and because the other man had asked him to stop by. The kids were in the living room with the television, snacks, coloring books, and friends. He and Graham were at the kitchen table, the top worn and soft from use and age. Graham's coffee was nice. Much better than the ubiquitous red-canned coffee he drank pre-Hannibal. Not quite as good as the fancy local small-batch roasted stuff Hannibal tended to buy.

"Papers," Graham said. "If you're sticking around for a while, you need an identity, so there you go. Birth certificate, social security card, driver's license, passport, bank account, credit cards…you should be covered."

"Philip Graham?" Will asked as he examined the paperwork and cards, his eyebrows high on his forehead. "This is incredible work. How'd you get my picture?"

"Phil and Will are close enough that when someone who really knows you calls you Will, bystanders who know you as Phil can assume they heard wrong. Same last name. You and I are obviously related, so no point changing that. You're my long lost uncle," Graham informed him. "Oh, and we just altered a photo of me," he shrugged. "Added some scars, grayed the hair a bit, some lines at the corners of the eyes. No major changes, really."

"Thanks Graham," Will said, meeting the other man's eyes. "This is…I've been thinking about sticking around, uh, long-term, but I don't have a lot of experience with obtaining documents. I had intended to ask you, actually, after seeing what you came up with for the kids. This makes things easier," Will said. "I appreciate it. Can I reimburse you for this?"

"All in a day's work, Uncle Phil," Graham said with a wink. "Besides, Hannibal asked me to get you squared away. I don't think he wants you to leave. Services for Hannibal are *gratis*, always."

—

Hannibal sat cross-legged on a check pattern picnic blanket in the back yard, Mischa cuddled in his lap. Ab was wandering the yard examining the different plants, flowers, rocks, and bugs he found. He occasionally brought an interesting specimen back for Mischa to examine.

They had been reading a children's book about plants. It was propped in front of them against a picnic basket, open to a page showing a simplified leaf diagram. Mischa held the leaf she had been examining next to the large image in the book.

"Wha's that?" she asked, pointing.

"That is the stalk," Hannibal provided. He would introduce her to words like *petiole* when she was older.

"Wha's that?" she asked again, pointing to another part.

"A vein," he said.

She looked back at him, partly turned around. “Vein?” she asked curiously, pointing at her wrist.

“Yes, just so,” he said with a smile. “They have the same name.” Her eyebrows scrunched adorably and she looked like she was going to protest.

Will wandered out of the back door just then, carrying a jug of freshly made lemonade. It was time for them to eat.

He kept Mischa cuddled in his lap. He could eat finger foods easily enough over her shoulder. He didn’t think he would ever get enough of seeing her alive and happy.

—

Hannibal watched Will in the soft, warm light of the study table lamps and fireplace. Will occupied a burgundy damask armchair while Hannibal relaxed on a matching chaise longue. They were both ostensibly reading. Will had been combing through history, current events, and sociology books and websites to catch himself up on the differences between his home universe and his new one.

Hannibal hoped Will considered it his new universe, at least. He thought the fact that Will was trying to learn so much about the world was a good sign. Why go to all that trouble if you still planned to leave once the kids had been “settled in”? The kids had been settled in for a few months already. Will and Hannibal had been companionable, friendly, even flirty throughout that time, but Hannibal had not renewed his spoken desire for Will to stay.

Perhaps that was why Will hadn’t said anything, Hannibal realized. Perhaps Will was waiting for Hannibal to indicate whether or not he was still welcome. Hannibal felt silly. He taught his patients about the importance of communication. Gave them the tools they needed to communicate effectively. And yet, look at him. Gazing longingly at his co-parent slash room mate he very much wished could become something *more*.

He had always found his friend Dr. Graham attractive. The man was subjectively beautiful, worthy of being painted and sculpted by the great artists. He had never been entirely comfortable with their age difference, however, even had the other man been interested in him. Graham was only ten years or so younger, but Hannibal had always preferred being the younger man in a relationship. He had long ago determined that the preference was his desire to be taken care of and protected showing itself, a result of losing his family, then living with emotionally distant relations.

His first close relationship after losing his family had been with his therapist, an older man to whom he owed his sanity. Hannibal’s affections for his therapist had developed sexual undertones in Hannibal’s mid-teens, when his therapist was perhaps forty years old. Nothing had ever come of that, of course. His therapist had not been a monster who preyed on children.

The urge to be taken care of by an older man had never faded. His preference became slightly more problematic as he himself aged and the number of attractive older men decreased, lost to marriage, other relationships, unsavory habits, or death.

Will was perhaps five or ten years older than himself. His brunette hair had become streaked with silver, and he required the reading glasses he knew his young friend Graham only used as camouflage.

He was no less beautiful than his younger counterpart. He was, perhaps, very slightly softer in the belly, no doubt from years of good food and drink. Even so, he was clearly in excellent shape and very good health. His eyes were bright, clear, inquisitive, knowing, accusing, fond: his eyes spoke when his voice kept its silence. His lips—such soft, plush lips—curled into the most intriguing grins, smirks, and smiles. When the two features were deployed together, when the other man *smirked* or *grinned* or *smiled* and then *met his eyes* with one of his *looks*, Hannibal would challenge anyone who might claim that Will was anything but irresistible.

And Will was a *protector*, capable of eliminating any threats to their family. That knowledge made him feel breathless in the best way. Protected and safe.

Hannibal did try to keep his feelings suppressed to some degree, fearful that he might scare the other man away. He had not been genuinely interested in another man for many years, and he was admittedly out of practice, but he did know that losing Will because he had made the other man uncomfortable with too-obvious interest would feel catastrophic.

Parenting was going extremely well, he thought. The pair of them made an excellent team in caring for, protecting, and teaching the children. He only wished everything, all of their feelings and expectations, were already laid out so they could take one step closer to becoming a family recognized by society and the law.

Now I'm thinking about marriage, Hannibal thought to himself with slight disgust at his inability to do things in the correct order. First, he told himself, he must learn how to communicate with Will about his tender feelings. Second, he must romance him. Third, if the universe was merciful, they might commit to a long-term relationship. Fourth, perhaps they could contemplate marriage.

Hannibal had been staring at Will for several minutes without pause, and finally Will acknowledged the surveillance. "Are you drawing me in your mind?" Will wondered.

"Simply contemplating our situation," Hannibal corrected.

"Situation?" Will inquired, a single eyebrow slowly rising, expression curious.

He was unfairly beautiful. And Hannibal felt like an awkward teenager, uncertain what to say. He couldn't admit that he had been optimistically planning their future together. Could he?

Will looked at him knowingly, which froze Hannibal until he consciously relaxed.

"Graham gave me the papers. Said you requested them. Thank you," Will said, expression gently amused.

"I didn't wish to be presumptuous, but knew they would be necessary if you decided to stay for any real length of time," Hannibal admitted.

“It was thoughtful,” Will assured him. “I had planned to ask him to have some made for me.”

“I see,” Hannibal said. Will planned to stay, then, for at least some time longer. That was a relief. It gave him time to determine the best course of action and proceed slowly, without scaring Will into pressing the button on the watch still strapped to his wrist.

Hannibal had nightmares about Will accidentally pressing it and disappearing forever. That, at least, was something he could reasonably discuss with the other man.

“Will, I have nightmares of you pressing the button on your watch by mistake and vanishing forever,” he said with far more bluntness than he usually preferred.

—

“Oh,” Will said, feeling like he had been punched in the gut, but attempting to stay calm. “You’re right. It’s incredibly stupid for me to keep wearing it.” What if Mischa had accidentally pressed the button while he held her, or when they played? What if he’d knocked it on the night stand as he slept? What if Hannibal had bumped it when they cooked together in the kitchen, and *both* of them had been swept away to another place and time, leaving the children all alone?

Fuck.

He slipped the device off of his wrist and handled it carefully, his fingers far from the button, suddenly feeling like the thing was a terrible weapon intent on ripping every good thing away from him. “Do you have a cloth bag, maybe?” he asked Hannibal. “If it’s not touching skin, it’s not supposed to work.”

Hannibal looked surprised almost, and hopeful. “One moment,” he said, moving over to his desk and opening a drawer. From it, he took a long, narrow box. When he opened it, Will saw a fancy fountain pen briefly before he removed it and placed it back into the drawer. He then removed the cushion made to keep a pen in place from the interior, leaving only the velvet-lined hard case.

He walked around the desk and offered the open box to Will.

Will carefully, so carefully, placed the watch into the case, strap folded beneath it. The unremarkable-looking device looked silly in the fancy case. He accepted the still-open case from Hannibal, then, and gently closed the lid.

“Do you have a safe?” Will asked, looking up into Hannibal’s eyes. He looked like he hadn’t expected Will to part with the watch, as if it could possibly be more important to him than Hannibal and the kids. What a silly man. “I wouldn’t want the kids to stumble upon it and play with it,” he explained.

Hannibal cleared his throat, “Yes. Would you…I could give you the number for the safe so you could still access it?” Hannibal offered.

Will blew out a breath. “My first thought is to say no, don’t worry about it. But I’m just paranoid enough that I can envision a situation where we’re under attack, you’re unconscious, and our best chance at escape is to grab the thing and the kids and jump us all to the next universe. In which case, yeah, knowing the number would be necessary.” He looked at Hannibal apologetically. “I can’t quiet my paranoia completely, no matter how comfortable I am here,” he admitted. “But I’m sorry if it makes you uncomfortable.”

“It doesn’t,” Hannibal said quickly, “make me uncomfortable. It makes me grateful to have you here to protect our family.”

Will thought it made Hannibal a little bit of something else, too, judging from his change in breathing and dilated pupils. He smiled at the man. “I’m glad you understand,” he said. Just the latest in a series of tells that he still felt just a little too awkward and uncertain to truly accept as encouragement to move their relationship to another level. He felt it was understandable to develop feelings for the man he was raising kids with and who embodied all of the positive traits of the man he used to love without the heavy baggage of being a cannibalistic serial killer. And he’d been attracted to the man from the beginning, of course. His sex life with his husband had never been their problem, and this Hannibal had all of the softness and vulnerability he had adored the most, less concerned with hiding inside a perfectly sculpted person suit.

He didn’t need a person suit, this Hannibal. He was a real person who didn’t gel his hair into submission or wear three-piece suits like armor. He wore tweed blazers with elbow patches, because he was just that adorable, and after he brushed his hair, he left it alone looking soft and like it was begging for fingers to run through it.

He channeled his murderous impulses into sending hit men after child abusers, and he smiled freely and openly, and somehow he didn’t mind that Will had literally murdered several versions of himself, plus a lot of other people. Because relative morality and net positive and whatever else he’d said. Will was still processing it.

He was a *vegetarian*. Will hadn’t seen that one coming, but he didn’t mind it, and he understood. Besides, if Will was overly concerned about what he ate, he wouldn’t have been eating people for several years. Eating tofu and custom-made plant-based meat was not a problem for him.

He would like to teach the kids how to fish someday, though. Catch and release was traumatic for fish, though, and he preferred not to catch any fish at all if they weren’t going to feed his family. He’d talk to Hannibal about whether or not he might make an exception for fish they caught themselves. Fish, after all, had a very different mouth feel than meat from mammals. It might not trigger the same trauma response for him.

He paused his thoughts. He was thinking in “someday” terms. He was thinking an awful lot about *their* family. *His* family. Who was he kidding? Even before beginning the practical and symbolic gesture of putting the watch away, he had lost any intent to eventually leave, several weeks ago.

Hannibal showed him to the safe, recited the numbers as he entered them, and stood aside as Will deposited the Mont Blanc pen case and the burden it carried into the safe, tucking it into

the back. With any luck, he wouldn’t need it again.

The men stood side-by-side and watched the safe door swing shut, removing one threat to their family, their arms comfortably pressed together.

Becoming Accustomed

Chapter Summary

Our boys take their relationship to the next level.

Lots of fluff and a bit of smut.

Chapter Notes

Smut is skippable without missing anything important if that's not your thing. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will side-eyed Hannibal. The man sauteed tomatoes and seitan a few feet to his left while humming a jaunty tune and letting a barely-there smile rest on his face.

He wondered what had him so cheerful as he continued his task of finely grating the pecarino romano.

It had been a few weeks since Hannibal and Will had tucked away Will's device, which had eliminated the worry that he would accidentally leave the small family they were building together. With that source of tension removed, Hannibal had grown more comfortable and relaxed.

He laughed more. He smiled more. Their flirting grew more overt and the casual physical contact between them increased.

Ab had asked them the previous night at dinner if he could call them dad and father, or some variation.

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"It's too complicated to explain at school," he informed them. "Other people say 'my dad said' or 'I need to ask my mom' and I don't know what to call you so I just don't say anything about you at all. Mischa calls you tėtis still," he said to Hannibal, "but my classmates don't know what that means."

"Tėtis!" Mischa interjected, looking at Hannibal, who smiled at her and patted her little hand.

Will met eyes with Hannibal before redirecting his gaze to Ab. "Uh, yeah kiddo, I don't see why not. Hannibal? Do you have a preference?"

Hannibal's brows furrowed. He seemed to be putting serious thought into it. Finally, he answered. "I don't mind any of them except 'daddy'," he said with clear discomfort on his face. "Too many bad men prefer that one."

Will and Ab both nodded in understanding.

"You know I called mine 'papa' or 'pops'," Will pointed out. "I don't mind dad, though. Father's too formal for me."

Ab shrugged. "Okay. I'll call you papa," he said to Will. "And you dad," he said to Hannibal.

The toothy smile Hannibal had directed at all three of them was incredibly endearing. Will had considered Hannibal's slightly crooked teeth endearing since the first time he'd noticed them, and when they were bared with happiness instead of viciousness, he couldn't stop the warmth that traveled throughout his body even had he wanted to.

—

"What's got you in such a good mood?" Will wondered, softly brushing his arm against Hannibal's before returning to cheese grating.

"You'll see," he said. "I have a surprise after dinner." His secretive little smile was something Will wished he could kiss off of Hannibal's face, but they hadn't taken that step yet.

"Whatever it is, I look forward to it," Will said with a content grin.

—

Dinner had been devoured and the dishes washed by the time the front doorbell rang. Hannibal dried his hands off on a cloth before heading towards the door expectantly, Ab following behind. Will carrying Mischa brought up the rear. They were all curious.

The door opened.

"Graham," Will said in surprise. "And friend?" He smiled at the puppy in the man's arms. He thought he knew where this was going.

"Will, Hannibal, kids," he said nodding at each of them. "I'd like you to meet Cupcake."

Cupcake was some sort of Lab-Shepherd mix barely old enough to leave her mom, if his estimation was correct.

"Please, come in," Hannibal said. All of them danced backward to give the man room to enter, and moved into the front room for convenience.

Mischa was practically vibrating in Will's arms, clapping her hands and making squeaky little noises he'd heard her make while playing with Graham's dogs. He lowered her to the floor gently and she immediately ran to Graham's side.

"A baby," she whispered.

“Yes,” Graham agreed, crouching on the rug with the puppy still in his arms. “She’s just a baby. Found her and the others in a box left outside one of my offices, too young. We’ve been bottle feeding them the last few weeks but now they’re weaned and ready to meet their new families. You can pet her,” he said to Mischa, smiling fondly.

She gently stroked the puppy’s head with her little fingers. The puppy turned its head and licked her hand happily, then pushed its nose into her palm. Mischa giggled.

Ab joined them and sat on the floor, allowing Graham to transfer the pup into his lap where she immediately jumped up to begin licking his face. Ab laughed, throwing his head back in an attempt to escape the puppy tongue. Mischa shrieked in joy.

“You can change her name if you want to,” Graham explained. “It’s just what I’ve been calling her. She’s so young she won’t have any trouble at all learning a new one.” He looked up at Will. “I would offer to help train her, but I have a feeling you won’t have any trouble there,” he said with a smirk.

Will, a huge smile splitting his face, laughed. “I think we’ll be good, but I would like to bring her over to socialize with yours if you don’t mind.”

“No problem,” Graham agreed, rising to his feet and brushing his hands on his thighs. “You could drop her by the daycare once in a while too, if you want. I would have saved two for you, but there were only four and my guys and their kids were really excited.” He shrugged. “So four families each get one. I’ll let you know if we get another that’d be a good fit,” he offered.

“Splendid,” Hannibal said, smiling happily at the scene.

“Anyway, I’ve gotta head out,” Graham said. “There’s a bag on the porch with some supplies for a few days. Take her to any of my vets when she needs spaying,” he said to Hannibal, “no charge. I’m sure you won’t have any problems,” he directed at Will.

“Thanks, man,” he said, giving Graham a hug. “You know what this means to me.”

“Can’t be Will Graham without a dog or five,” Graham agreed, squeezing him before letting go and stepping back.

Once Graham had exited, only pausing to hand the bag of supplies to Hannibal, Will approached him feeling almost breathless from the light feeling in his chest. He cupped his hand around the back of Hannibal’s head, then leaned up and gently kissed him on the cheek. “Thank you,” he whispered into the other’s ear, before dropping his head and nuzzling into his shoulder. “I’m pretty sure I don’t deserve you.”

With his free hand, Hannibal reached up and laced his fingers into Will’s curly mop, massaging his fingertips into the scalp. “This is a conversation we have had before,” Hannibal said. “And you are aware of my thoughts on the matter.”

Will continued to nuzzle into Hannibal like a cat, a small smile nearly hidden against Hannibal’s shoulder. “Ab asked me why we don’t share a bedroom.”

“Oh?” Hannibal said, sounding interested.

“When I explained, he asked why I hadn’t ‘asked you out’ yet. Suggested that he and Mischa could stay with Graham for a night to give us some privacy.” He chuckled.

Hannibal nodded in approval. “The plan has merit. He’s a smart boy.”

“A smart boy who will grow up to be a very intelligent man,” Will confirmed, lifting his head and looking into Hannibal’s warm eyes, crinkled from his broad smile. “Saturday? Is that too soon?”

“I will ask Graham. If he has no other plans, I doubt that he will mind,” Hannibal assured him. “He’s very good with them, and a capable protector. Much like yourself.”

“Funny how that works. Saturday, then. Probably.” He kissed Hannibal on the cheek again, took the bag from Hannibal’s other hand, then returned to the kids and the new puppy. He began unpacking the supplies a few feet away from them. They weren’t familiar with things like puppy pads, so it was time for a brief lesson.

—

The Will Graham native to the current dimension, the fortieth Will had visited, was a business man.

Will had little to no knowledge of Graham’s illegal activities, but after he had known the man for several weeks, he had finally trusted him enough to reveal his legitimate businesses. It was unspoken that any money made from less-than-legal activities was laundered through said legitimate businesses. Those happened to be a series of well-respected sliding-scale dog and cat boarding, daycare, grooming, and veterinary care complexes.

They evidently had a glowing reputation in the community for offering first-rate services even in under-served low income neighborhoods, and charging only what people could afford to pay. The sliding-scale was possible thanks to the many “donations” they received from *the community.*

Graham didn’t care about buying himself mansions, yachts, and fancy cars. A lot of the payments he received for *other* services really did go right into funding the legitimate businesses, so they weren’t obvious fronts like so many businesses used for money laundering tended to be.

And his guys were legitimate employees, only a little more versatile than normal. They took care of whatever shady business happened behind the scenes, and when they weren’t otherwise occupied, they took shifts exercising and grooming the guests, manning the front desks, and cleaning. That they were very well paid by their employer wasn’t a crime, was it?

Graham’s LLC had funded veterinary school for several of his guys’ kids over the years, and the company had truly become a family business. He had been very pleased when they were able to expand their services to include veterinary care.

Honest veterinary care. Emergencies were no problem, and none of that $4,000 for a $400 procedure bullshit the for-profit emergency animal hospitals liked to pull. Their clients were more likely to pay $40 *(cash only)*, and if the records showed that the customer had been charged $4,000 to account for the extra $3,960 slipped into the deposit next to the customer's two twenties, no one said anything.

Who could justify going after a company that did so much good for the community with so little apparent gain?

Crime would happen, after all. Better that the scene was dominated by such nice, stand-up criminals.

—

Will gazed at Hannibal over his wine glass. "Odd, isn't it, how little time it takes to become accustomed to something?"

"Indeed," Hannibal said with an acknowledging tilt of his head. "It follows that we will become accustomed to spending time alone together before long if we make the effort."

Will wet his upper lip with the wine, then darted his tongue out to catch the lingering flavor as he placed the crystal goblet on the side table. "Agreed." He allowed the corners of his mouth to curl into a barely-there smile.

The men were relaxing in the study again after an intimate dinner for two. Candlelight and the nicest china had been involved. The kids and pup were, as suggested by Ab, staying the night at Graham's.

"Tell me something I don't know about you," Hannibal requested.

Will looked at the ceiling in thought, holding his breath a moment before exhaling with a *whoosh*. "While I had encephalitis, back in my late thirties, I started sleepwalking. Found myself walking towards town in the middle of the night in my boxers and t-shirt, once, before some nice cops woke me and drove me home. My feet were *wrecked.*" He shook his head at the memory. "One of my dogs had followed me. Winston. He was such a good dog, incredibly kind and loyal despite obvious mistreatment in the past. Being able to forgive and move on with life like he was able to is something I aspire to. I think I'm making progress."

"I believe so," Hannibal agreed. "When you look at me, do you find that you are still desirous of revenge?"

Will shook his head. "No. Maybe if you dressed in an ostentatious three-piece suit, served me a dinner made from extremely questionable ingredients, and started gas-lighting me? But no, as you are, you're different enough that I don't feel for you what I felt for him at the end." He picked up his wine again and took some into his mouth, rolled it around on his tongue, swallowed.

"Perhaps you would find it too forward were I to ask what it is that you do feel for me," Hannibal asked without asking.

Will chuckled. “You already know,” he suggested. “You at least suspect.” He returned his wine to the table.

“You will not give me the pleasure of hearing it from your lips?”

“Mm,” Will said, standing, crossing the few feet between them. He sat next to Hannibal on the chaise longue and placed a hand on his khaki-clad knee. “You,” he said, meeting Hannibal’s warm eyes, “are unlike anything I could have anticipated. If I’m allowed to stay by your side until I die, there is a possibility that I’ll die happy.”

“I think much the same of you,” Hannibal said, voice low, raising his hand to cup Will’s jaw and massage his stubbly cheek and soft lips with a thumb.

“We’re quite a pair,” Will observed, leaning into the other man’s hand, parting his lips so Hannibal’s thumb grazed Will’s sharp teeth. Hannibal’s breath hitched.

“Wicked boy,” he whispered.

Will’s lips curled. “Hardly a boy. I’m older than you,” he pointed out, raising an eyebrow.

Hannibal trembled. “Yes,” he agreed. “You are.”

Will caressed Hannibal’s hand where it continued to cup his face, then gently repositioned it to rest at the back of his neck. “You can kiss me now, if you’d like,” he invited, his tongue playfully darting out to moisten his lips.

Hannibal needed no further encouragement. He pulled Will towards him as he leaned in, angling his head and fitting their mouths together carefully. Gently.

Will smiled into the kiss as he wrapped his hand around the back of Hannibal’s neck, massaging as he deepened the kiss. *Not too fast*, he told himself. This Hannibal was different. Softer. Kinder. This Hannibal wasn’t the kind who would fuck him while they were both slick with someone else’s blood, or strangle him to the edge of consciousness while riding him. He needed to be gentle, patient, careful. He needed—

Hannibal bit his lip, hard. Will could taste blood. His cock took notice of the proceedings. Will was about to ask Hannibal if he’d meant to do that, just in case it’d been a mistake and he wasn’t really into biting to the point of drawing blood, but then Hannibal’s fingernails dug sharply into his skin.

Okay, he thought. *Yeah. I can do this.*

He laced his fingers into Hannibal’s hair, clutched a handful, and *pulled* hard enough to yank Hannibal’s head back and off of his mouth.

Hannibal *moaned* in apparent delight.

Will grinned in satisfaction as he leaned in, still holding Hannibal’s head by his hair, and bit the underside of his jaw. Not hard enough to draw blood, not somewhere so visible, but enough to hurt. Mentally acknowledging Hannibal’s steadily deepening breaths, he moved to

his shoulder, still covered in oxford cloth, and bit down hard enough that he *would* have broken skin if not for the fabric blunting his teeth. The other man would certainly bruise.

“Yes!” Hannibal hissed. “Please,” he begged.

Who knew that the man who had done so much to avoid ever again being a cannibal would be so into biting?

Impatiently, Will grabbed at either side of the shirt placket and *pulled*, hoping to pop the buttons and save himself some trouble. No such luck. They held firm, and Will chuckled. “No bodice ripping this time, I guess. Harder than it seems,” he said with good humor as he manually undid the buttons. Hannibal laughed with him, a boyish grin shining from his face.

“For the best,” Hannibal said. “I rather enjoy this shirt.”

“I’ll ask next time,” Will said, smirking up at him.

Before long, the buttons were conquered and Hannibal shrugged out of the garment. Will almost immediately nuzzled into the fully exposed chest hair, deeply inhaling Hannibal’s delicious natural scent. “You smell incredible,” he breathed before sucking a nipple into his mouth.

Hannibal exhaled as if punched in the gut, then inhaled quickly, raising a hand to the back of Will’s head to hold him in place. “Your mouth feels divine,” he said on a sigh. Will continued to suck, nibbling a little and licking to sooth the sting.

“I can think of someplace even better to put my mouth,” Will said, moving his hands down to undo Hannibal’s button and…buttons. A five button fly. Was Hannibal trying to torture him? Pushing frustration aside in favor of amusement, he looked through his lashes at the other man, waiting for permission. Hannibal nodded. Will made (relatively) quick work of the khakis, undoing the fastenings and pulling them off with Hannibal’s assistance, until Hannibal was left in only a pair of very *European*, tight and bulging, briefs.

He massaged the thick cock through the fabric until the cloth of the fly fell away to either side, exposing first the head and then the velvety shaft to Will’s greedy gaze. He leaned in, nuzzling. He loved the way a dry cock felt against his face, the smooth skin sliding against his stubble, unpleasant for some men but not for Hannibal if his delighted encouragement was any indication.

His mouth was practically watering by the time he took the head into it, his saliva mixing with precum as he sealed his lips and *sucked*, then massaged with his tongue. Hannibal trembled beneath him, fingers digging into the damask. Will wondered if he would tear through the upholstery and sink his fingers right into the stuffing.

“Will,” Hannibal gasped. “Inside, please.”

Will pulled his mouth off of Hannibal, but kept his lips against the shaft. He licked his lips, tongue tip flicking against cock, and tasted salt. “Fingers?” he asked.

“No,” he insisted. *“You.”*

“You want to do this here?” Will asked, lips still moving against Hannibal’s sensitive cock. “Or upstairs?”

“Yes,” he grunted. “Upstairs.”

Will gave Hannibal’s cock another lick and suck before he rose to his feet and pulled Hannibal up after him. He wrapped his arms around the taller man, holding him close and kissing his neck, before reluctantly stepping back and pulling him towards the door.

Will unbuttoned his own shirt as they climbed the stairs, shrugging out of it and dropping it outside his bedroom before moving down the hall to Hannibal’s.

Hannibal, right behind him, ran his hands over the newly naked skin. He seemed to be lost for words, because the only sound he made was a sort of desperate *unf* before he managed to latch his mouth onto the back of Will’s shoulder, making continued progress down the hallway difficult.

Will stopped walking and leaned back into Hannibal, enjoying the feel of the teeth in the process of bruising his skin. He undid the button and *zipper* (because he was a considerate man) of his wool slacks and peeled them off, Hannibal following his movements and wrapping his arms around Will’s abdomen while he kicked the pants and socks off of his legs and feet.

He grunted in approval when Hannibal’s hand wandered down to palm his dick through his boxer-briefs. He knew he needed to get them into the bedroom before they ended up fucking on the hallway floor with only spit for lube, so he grabbed Hannibal’s wrist, lifted the hand out of dangerous territory, and moved towards the bedroom once again.

Having finally made it into the room, both men slid off their underwear and paused momentarily, examining one another’s nude bodies appreciatively.

Fuck, Will thought. Hannibal was gorgeous, of course. He had expected it, but to see him fully exposed was a privilege. His skin was smooth with few scars, he was fit but soft, and his body hair was hot as hell. He held special admiration for body hair, something he’d never had much of. “I can’t wait to get my mouth all over you,” he said aloud.

“Likewise,” Hannibal responded, his voice like gravel. “But later. I have a very particular need currently,” he said as he strode forward a few paces and wrapped his fingers around Will’s length.

“Mm,” Will hummed in agreement. “Bed. Lube?”

With a squeeze, Hannibal let go of Will’s very interested cock and strode around him to open a drawer and extract a bottle. Without hesitation, he climbed onto the bed, laid down on his back, and spread his legs.

Will grinned. “You’re not playing around.”

“This scenario has been playing over and over in my head for months, Will, and you’ve been teasing me all evening.”

“Fair enough,” he said with a chuckle as he climbed onto the bed and lay alongside Hannibal, nuzzling into his chest hair once again. “You’re so fucking sexy it’s unreal,” he said. Pulling back, he grabbed the bottle and pumped some lube onto his hand. He kissed Hannibal’s mouth sweetly as he reached down to begin massaging the ring of muscle around his opening.

Hannibal licked into him, taking hold of Will’s head so he could deepen the kiss, transform it from sweet to filthy.

Will slipped two fingers into Hannibal with minimal resistance. He pulled away from Hannibal's lips. “You prepared yourself before dinner,” he observed.

“I suppose I did,” Hannibal hedged.

“You fucked yourself with a toy earlier today to take the edge off of tonight,” he guessed again.

“It’s been a while for me,” Hannibal breathed. “I want this to last.”

“We had the same idea,” he said as he began massaging the prostate, thinking about his self-indulgently erotic shower earlier that day. “Do we have condoms?” he wondered. “Sorry, we should have had this conversation earlier,” he said, grimacing slightly.

“Yes, in the drawer,” Hannibal motioned with his head, his breath becoming even more uneven. “But there is no need to worry. I am free of disease,” he managed, “and I looked at your results when you left the notification letter next to your chair in the study.”

“Nosy bastard,” Will said affectionately, deepening the prostate stimulation, drawing out a low moan from his partner. “No condom, then?”

Hannibal’s “no” trailed off into another moan.

Will slowly drove Hannibal mad with his fingers until the man was begging. By the time he draped Hannibal’s knees over his arms and slid into his tight heat, he had decided that, if possible, he would like to repeat the experience at least several times a week for the rest of his life.

“Jesus, Hannibal, you feel incredible,” Will breathed. He fucked into his partner deeply and steadily, the smooth glide making him grateful for the high quality lubricant.

It was quite a while before Hannibal managed to reply verbally.

“Likewise,” Hannibal gasped, head thrown back and mouth open, fingers clawing into the sheets. Will could feel the other man’s legs trembling where they were supported by his arms. The slow build of prostate stimulation was having its effect and Hannibal’s cock was steadily leaking fluid.

Will held Hannibal's hips more tightly, fingernails digging into flesh, as he continued pounding into his lover's body. He grew closer to his own crescendo.

“Will!” Hannibal shouted. “Oh! Oh-” his entire body trembled, his eyes rolled back, and the flow of fluid from his cock increased. His hole contracted and expanded. Will’s favorite thing about prostate orgasms was that they could be had in multiples, but he was close to blowing and selfishly wanted them to finish together. He wrapped Hannibal’s cock in his hand and pumped it as he thrust forcefully into his partner’s body. The only thing better than a prostate orgasm was combining it with a penile orgasm.

Hannibal shouted incoherently, ejaculate spurting from his dick. Will emptied himself into Hannibal with a shout of his own, the bright-hot explosion in his center causing him to tremble as well. He panted as sweat dripped down his body, overheated from exertion and orgasm.

When he could move again, Will pulled out and fell onto the bed alongside Hannibal. He was happy, satisfied, and tired, but Hannibal was *wrecked*. Will kissed the tears from his temple, licking his lips to catch the salty taste, and wrapped his arm around the other man to pull him close.

“You’re so gorgeous,” he whispered into Hannibal’s ear. “You’re everything I could want. Shh, it’s okay, I know it’s hard to talk right now.”

He kissed every bit of Hannibal he could reach without shifting his body too much.

“Will,” Hannibal rasped after several minutes. “Thank you.”

“Anytime, babe,” he said. “You’re on top next time.”

Hannibal sighed in what might be disappointment. “It’s only fair,” he agreed.

Will smiled big, then kissed the pout off of his face.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the slight delay in update. It's gardening season so I've been busy.

This story is close to wrapping up!

If you want to follow Geologist Will & FBI Will's bromance when it commences, subscribe to the Series this work is now part of. <3

Don't

Chapter Summary

Will hates that he loves to murder people.

Poor thing.

Three years later

Will stalked the man through the forested section of some park—he had no idea which, it wasn't one he visited with his family—his hand on his knife.

His blood felt like it was boiling and his heart was pounding, the need to *protect* foremost in his mind.

He shouldn't be doing this.

Don't do this, he told himself. *You can protect without doing this.*

Don't, don't, don't he repeated to himself over and over until the moment he grabbed the man from behind, arm around his chest, and stabbed the knife *in* and pulled it *across*.

A torrent of blood and fluids poured from the gash, falling like heavy rain on the path. His knife and hand were soaked in hot blood.

Gutted. Like his first Hannibal. But he wouldn't be comforting this one.

He felt *marvelous,* adrenaline and dopamine rushing through his body. He felt like he could breathe after being underwater for a very long time. He hadn't even realized how much he'd missed killing until his abstinence was broken.

He dragged the man, still struggling and gasping, to the shore of the lake. He snatched the man's wallet before rolling him in. Robbery gone wrong, maybe?

He tried to frame a scenario in his mind, tried to see from the perspective of the police, tried to think of how to manipulate the optics.

This was sloppy. Had he ever been this sloppy? *Fuck.*

The way the man's gaze had lingered on Mischa. The way his hand had lingered on her shoulder. She had only just turned *seven*. He hadn't been able to think.

His family had gone home from the school recital where sweet Mischa had played her tiny violin. Ab had spent the recital blushing almost constantly, avoiding the eyes of a girl his age who also had family performing. He and Hannibal had held hands, the feel of Hannibal's wedding ring against his own fingers a joy and a comfort.

After, Will had gone on a walk. Hannibal had given him a *look.*

"What am I doing?" he asked the corpse. He kicked the body, still shuddering, still dying, further into the water. "What the fuck am I doing."

—

Hannibal hadn't asked why he had returned wearing Graham's clothes. Will hadn't volunteered the information.

Graham hadn't been thrilled with him. On the off-chance Will had left any DNA or witnesses behind, Graham was far more likely to be implicated than Will. They had built a plan in case of any future incidents, though, and Will's clothes and shoes had been burnt in a location not connected to either of them.

"You know I would never kill you, don't you?" he had asked his husband as they lay in bed.

The man, looking slightly taken aback, had responded "I trust that you will not."

"Good," Will had said with a sigh. "That's good." He couldn't help but cling more tightly to his husband.

—

A year passed before he lost his temper again.

He found himself on the phone with Graham. "What's for dinner?" he asked. The phrase was code for: get someplace where you'll have a watertight alibi. Just in case.

That evening, he hunted a despicable rich man who bought his way out of being charged with human trafficking.

He had taken a page out of his first husband's book and tampered with the man's car, then approached him on a dark road. The painter's coveralls he had worn were some comfort that he would not leave physical evidence or stain his clothes with the despicable man's blood.

After bashing the man over the head, he had dragged him into the woods. There, he cut his throat, the spray of blood over the ferns and sorrel incredibly satisfying. The blood was black in the moonlight filtering through the trees. It truly was beautiful. He almost missed his first husband.

Almost.

Remembering the infidelity took care of any nostalgia attempting to haunt him.

—

He managed two years before the next incident. Then three.

He thought he was getting better. He thought he had it under control.

Only to fall off the wagon once again.

—

His hunt for a serial rapist had gone a bit wrong. He'd gotten himself a little bit stabbed before he managed to stab the other man with a sexy little stiletto dagger, through the eye and into his brain. There was no use trying to hide the injury from Hannibal. They had a rather active sex life, which generally involved nudity.

"Will," Hannibal said, too gently. He rested fingertips at the edge of the redness that surrounded the wound in his side.

Will braced himself for confrontation.

"These stitches are terrible," Hannibal continued, emotionless and even. "This will scar beyond acceptability. Give me a moment, I'll fetch my kit and redo them." His gait as he walked away was more stiff than usual, but his emotions were closed off, a mystery.

Will sat still, uncertain what to do. Surely Hannibal would ask why he had been stabbed. *Will I lie?* he asked himself.

—

Hannibal stood in the bathroom, breathing.

He wasn't sure if he wanted confirmation of his suspicions. In fact, he was certain that he did not want confirmation, as he had been for the past decade, since that first night Will had returned from a walk wearing Graham's clothing and shoes. He knew of his husband's past, his old hobbies. That was the natural place for his mind to go when, once in a while, Will came home in the wrong clothes and the wrong head space. *Not worth damaging our relationship over,* he had told himself. *Best leave it be.*

But this time, Will had been injured. If Will's blood had been left at a crime scene, if there was any chance he would be identified by law enforcement, Hannibal needed warning. He returned to the bedroom.

He knelt before Will, opened his kit, and snapped on his gloves. He sterilized the area before snipping the poorly-done sutures. Will winced as he cleaned the wound and afterward placed four neat stitches. The scar would be minimal.

"Will they find your blood at a crime scene or on a victim?" he asked, voice even, shoulders squared.

"No," Will croaked. "Graham helped. After. His guys helped."

“I don’t need to remind you that you have a family,” Hannibal stated, “all of whom would be devastated if you were imprisoned.” The thought of losing Will threatened to tear his heart in two. His chest ached at the anticipated pain.

“I’m sorry,” Will apologized, clearly miserable. “I thought it was just him. I didn’t think it was something I needed, I thought I could stop, I thought—”

“Do you feel that it is a compulsion, or perhaps only a…preference?” Hannibal asked, taking both of Will’s hands in his, calloused from labor, beginning to wrinkle with age. “We are not young men, my love. Forgive me for saying so, but if you continue, I fear that you will be bested by someone younger and stronger. I fear that the next stab wound you receive will be fatal.” He held onto Will’s hands more tightly, attempting to disguise the way his own hands shook at the thought.

“I don’t know,” Will said. “I just…I don’t know.”

“Will you speak with me about it until you do know?” he requested.

“Yes, I—” Will’s voice cracked. “I will. I’m fine with that, yes.”

They had talked through many of the issues caused by Will’s past, but not this one. Not the one Will had obviously wanted to hide the most.

“I don’t deserve you,” Will whispered. A familiar refrain.

“Did they deserve it?” Hannibal asked. “The ones you have killed in this universe.”

Some of the tension seemed to drain out of Will’s frame. “Yes,” he said, voice rough. “Rapists. Pedophiles. I swear to you that only monsters have found their end in me in this place.” The assurance held the strength of a vow.

Hannibal relaxed slightly. That was a relief, at least. “Good,” he said aloud. “If need be, I am your alibi.”

“I love you,” seemed to be the only thing Will was able to say in reply.

Dyspepsia

Chapter Summary

Over the course of several months, Hannibal and Will talked about murder.

It made Will feel positively nostalgic at times, but mostly like a failure.

“What do you feel when you kill?” was the first question Hannibal asked.

“By all means, don’t pull any punches.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Over the course of several months, Hannibal and Will talked about murder.

It made Will feel positively nostalgic at times, but mostly like a failure.

“What do you feel when you kill?” was the first question Hannibal asked.

“By all means, don’t pull any punches.” Will huffed. He settled into the chair, attempting to relax tense muscles and failing. Grudgingly, he admitted “I feel powerful. Just. Thrilled. Manic, almost.”

“What do you feel physically?” Hannibal uncrossed, then recrossed his legs. His hands lay clasped on his lap, no pen or paper present. It wouldn’t do them any favors to have records of these conversations.

“Feverish. Strong. Like I can breathe again.” Will looked at the ceiling, at the stained glass trinkets they had created as a family to hang there to catch the late afternoon sunlight. He frowned.

“What do you feel when you hunt?” Hannibal’s voice was emotionless, smooth, non-judgmental.

It almost hurt to look at him directly, like looking into the sun. He was too good to Will, too forgiving, too determined to help. The man loved him despite his monstrousness, for reasons beyond his ken. Sometimes he wondered if his husband believed he needed to make up for the monstrousness of his counterparts in other dimensions. When he asked about it, though, Hannibal denied any such motivation.

Will spoke after a moment of reflection. “Anger, and anticipation.” He studied his own hands, wrapped his right hand around his left wrist.

“What triggers your desire to hunt?”

“Anger. Boredom?” he shook his head. “Not boredom with you or our family,” he clarified. “Maybe…purposelessness is a better word. Maybe I wouldn’t be like this if I had more time-consuming hobbies.” He laughed at himself, shaking his head.

“You could take up oil painting,” Hannibal suggested with humor dry as dust.

—

His first experiment was to adopt Hannibal’s methods and simply send Graham’s guys after the horrible people he discovered.

On the positive side, a few monsters had been eliminated, and Will’s hands were essentially clean.

On the negative, Will’s hands still itched for the grip of a sharp knife. He found little satisfaction in a kill he took no part in.

—

“Give me a timeline of the murders you have committed since arriving in this dimension,” Hannibal requested.

Will did.

“What do you feel contributed to the periods of…inactivity? Two years, three years.”

“Stubbornness?” Will guessed. “I was trying to stop. I was certain I could stop myself from doing it again.”

“Until you did it again.” Hannibal’s face was free of the mocking Will thought he deserved.

“Until I did it again,” Will agreed.

—

One thought was that Will might like to tag along with Graham’s guys when they *took care of a problem.* It would be much safer to be part of a group, to have backup right there.

He tried it. It was weird.

He straddled the man who had beaten his wife and daughter to near-death and gotten away with it, then filed a petition for custody of the child. He came down on his face with a cross pein hammer, spattering himself with blood and attempting to revel in the broken cries. The man was a monster. He deserved a painful death.

Will felt eyes on him, observing his every move. Judging? He found himself sighing in disappointment.

Killing became impersonal with an audience, and left him feeling frustrated and self-conscious. He thanked the guys for humoring an old man. They laughed kindly and smacked him on the back. “Anytime, buddy,” the leader of the group said. “The way you took him down, I wouldn’t think you a day over 40.”

Will shook his head. The man was being kind to him. He could feel his age down to his bones. His knees were sore from kneeling over the man he’d just killed, and getting back to his feet would have been much harder without one of the guys assisting him. He could tell the weather was changing because his joints ached.

In other worlds, Will Graham was still young.

—

“It’s almost funny,” Will mused. “I have been the cause of more deaths these past months than I had been in years, but the indirectness and lack of intimacy made them feel almost meaningless.”

“Do you feel that it is not the knowledge that a terrible person has been defeated that gives you satisfaction?” Hannibal asked, calm as ever. “Instead, would you say that it is the kill itself occurring at your hands that brings satisfaction?”

“Yes,” he whispered. “Their despicable acts are the justification I use to satisfy my bloodlust, I guess.” He clenched his fingers around the arms of the chair, feeling the solid wood underneath the padding. “Goddamn it,” he sighed, slumping. “I’m so sorry you’re stuck with me, Hannibal. You don’t deserve this.”

“I am perfectly capable of deciding what I will or will not tolerate, Will, as you know.”

—

Hannibal woke to an empty bed. Unusual, but not unprecedented. Will usually woke earlier than he did, accustomed to doing so after many years spent accommodating the needs of his dogs. He tended to return to bed, however, before Hannibal opened his eyes to the new day.

He flipped the covers back, then swung his legs out of the bed, feeling around for his slippers and taking note of the dark, empty bathroom with half-closed eyes. His feet finally met the warm comfort of sheepskin and he slid them on.

After performing his morning ablutions, Hannibal descended the stairs and made his way into the kitchen. Dearest Mischa was perched on a stool at the kitchen island Will had installed for them some years ago, nibbling some toast while staring fixedly at her phone. Presumably a video of some sort, given the irritating music underneath a young person’s enthusiastic, insistent voice. It was something he loved about young people, the way they passionately advocated for what they believed in. Became so enthusiastic about their interests. The effect of hormones on emotions was fascinating. One of the reasons he had entered the field of child psychology.

Mischa tapped her screen, cutting off the music and chatter. She looked up at him with a small smile, then around the rest of the kitchen, searching. “Where’s pops?” she wondered.

“You haven’t seen him?” Hannibal asked, an unwelcome pang in his chest.

“Nope,” she said, popping the ‘p’ and taking another bite, looking back to her phone. Met with silence, she looked up at him again. “Is everything okay, dad?”

“I’m sure everything is fine,” Hannibal assured her. “But I have not seen Will since last night.” Not since he had felt the other man leave their bed in the early hours, assumed it to be a routine bathroom trip, and fallen back to sleep.

His breath caught as a thought crossed his mind.

No, he told himself. *Don’t be absurd. He would never…*

Would he?

“Excuse me for a moment, my dear,” Hannibal requested. He left the kitchen without waiting for a response, but heard a vague sound of agreement behind him.

He held his emotions in check with some effort, making his way to the safe behind the painting with forced calm. He was overreacting. He knew he was. He must be.

It took him three tries to input the combination correctly, as flustered as he was. He held his breath as he swung the door open and reached for the Mont Blanc case.

His hands shook as he lifted the lid. The case was smooth beneath his fingers, the hinge giving easily. He forced himself to look.

And it was there.

Scratched and worn, the miraculous device that had brought him his husband from across worlds. The little red button set innocently in its side, a threat and a promise.

He exhaled in a rush, closing his eyes for a long moment in relief. He opened them again, blinking away the moisture as it gathered. He gently closed the case and returned it to the safe.

It was then that he noticed a piece of paper resting where the case had originally been. The paper felt nice under his fingers, the weight and texture he preferred for his personal correspondence.

It was dated five years before.

Hannibal,

If you’re reading this because I’ve disappeared, I apologize for the actions of my future self. I know myself well enough to realize that when things get complicated, I’m liable to run away instead of staying in one place and working things out like an adult.

Whether or not I would leave a note on my way out the door is debatable, so I'm leaving this just in case I was an unforgivably inconsiderate idiot.

Hannibal, I would never leave you or the kids. Not forever. Please give me a little time to come back to you. I won't fault you for being extremely angry with me. I'm sure it's justified. Please accept my apologies eventually.

I'm a broken man and I don't deserve you. I've known this since I met you. Thank you for putting up with my bullshit.

If you're reading this because I'm dead, I hope I never let you doubt how much I love you. If there's another side, I'll do my best to sneak into the good place before you get there.

Yours,

Will

Hannibal's breath shook as he exhaled.

Infuriating man, he thought. And then he felt awful, because Will had probably left because Hannibal had been unable to help him overcome his demons.

It had been an uncertain venture from the start, admittedly. There were good reasons therapy required some degree of emotional distance between the doctor and patient to be most effective.

Unfortunately, it wasn't a simple matter to find another suitable therapist when the topic at hand was serial killing.

He shook his head in frustration, then returned the note to the safe and closed it and the painting behind which it hid.

He picked up his phone from its charging pad, then, and called Will's number. It went straight to voicemail, no ringing at all. His text received no reply and no notification that it had been delivered or read. He stood there for some time staring at it, willing it to change.

Mischa was still in the kitchen and watched him warily as he entered. Faking composure, he perched on another stool. Needing something to do with his hands, he took a napkin, placed it on the surface before him, then selected a blood orange from the antique colander functioning as a fruit bowl. He rubbed it with his thumb, enjoying the texture, then began to peel it. Little explosions of citrus leapt from the pores of the skin as it was compressed and torn, spreading a welcome fragrance.

"Dad?" she asked. "Is everything okay?"

"There was a note," he admitted. "It seems your papa anticipated that at some point he might leave without word. He promises to return to us. This is assuming that he has not simply gone on an errand without notifying us."

Her eyebrows furrowed in worry. "Will he be back in time for my birthday?" she asked.

“If he is not, I will be very cross with him,” he said. “But perhaps he will return today.”

“If he doesn’t, I’m going to cry *so much* when he finally comes back so that he’ll remember it with dread always and will never leave again.”

Hannibal smirked, though his heart was not in it. “Perhaps I could get away with that as well,” he said. “Would the thought of causing me tears fill his heart with dread, do you think?”

Mischa giggled, and shrugged. “Worth a try?”

--

Will sat in his car, staring into the woods. He had paid for a few nights of camping in a small campground, the primitive type blessedly free of RVs but also any sort of plumbing. He wasn’t entirely prepared for camping. He did not, for example, have a tent. Setting one up by himself was possible, but not fun, so he had walked past those shelves.

He’d purchased a sleeping bag and some food, though. And the camp host was happy to sell him firewood at a price considerably higher than the independent sellers he had noted alongside the old highway.

Shoulders slumped in misery, he opened his door and stepped out onto the pine needle coated ground. The place smelled like his old home in Wolf Trap. It made him miss his old pack for the thousandth time.

Pulling the firewood from the back of his car, he laid the split logs and bundle of kindling next to a stump not too far from the fire pit. Despite his mixed feelings about his cowardly flight away from his family, he *was* looking forward to a campfire. Somehow, fireplaces were never quite as nice as a good campfire.

He got to arranging the wood in the stone-ringed pit, making sure to provide the kindling enough breathing space to properly catch fire. He thought about what he was doing. Alone. In the woods.

It had gotten to be *too much*. He felt guilty that Hannibal’s help wasn’t *helping*. It was, truth be told, making things far worse. He should have known better. Talking frequently about committing murder kept it on his mind all of the time. He’d handled his compulsions the past decade by avoiding those thoughts whenever possible.

He felt like he was jumping dimensions again, that feeling where he was too big for his skin. Like he was coming apart. He wished he had a dog with him. Once upon a time, dogs were how he survived without self-destructing.

The bits of twigs and leaves tucked into the kindling caught, and he gently blew on the flame until it grew. Starting fires had always felt ritualistic to him. Like he was building an altar to the old gods.

Once the kindling had begun to burn properly and was well enough established, he sat back on his knees to watch as the fire first darkened the wood above, then finally caught at the edges.

He loved fire, if he was honest, but not enough to constitute a mental disorder. He had empathized with a few pyromaniacs years and years ago, but in those cases, their compulsion had been as much to *destroy* and to deny people their property or lives as it had been to simply enjoy the fire. Wood fires were completely different from house fires, as well. The scent of burning wood was soothing and wonderful. Not so for the scents of burning plastics and other household materials.

He rose with a bit of trouble. He was in good shape for a man of his age, but his knees were never happy with him when he kneeled on the ground for too long. His joints were stiff, but he managed.

He returned to his car and retrieved a small cooler he'd purchased while collecting food. Hannibal would be horrified by the hot dogs and white bread buns, sugary ketchup, and unnaturally yellow mustard, not to mention the cheese powder coated chips. They were by far the easiest food for camping, though, and at heart he was the same Will Graham he'd been as a child and young man.

He left the cooler on top of the picnic table, the only real sign of civilization at the site, then trekked into the woods a ways to find a thin greenwood branch to pierce through a hot dog for cooking over the fire. It was dusk, only a small amount of light revealing his surroundings, but he managed not to trip over anything. Not enough to cause him a tumble onto his face, anyway.

Eating the cheap, unhealthy food brought back many memories. He would always be grateful that he was given the chance to spend time with his pops again, back when he was still traveling. Other memories, he pushed away.

After eating, he watched the flames consume the seasoned wood and reach to the sky for oxygen. The red cinders at the base glittered in the dark as the fire burned lower.

It lasted for another hour before it was low enough for him to extinguish it without much trouble. A small flashlight led the way back to his car. In the woods, night was black. Even had their been a full moon, a flashlight would have been necessary under the canopy of the trees.

He laid the backseat down in the Subaru and arranged the sleeping bag and pillow that he'd picked up earlier that day.

It wasn't perfect, but it was manageable. He climbed onto his sleeping bag and used his key fob to automatically close the hatchback.

His phone was on airplane mode to block any calls or notifications, but he queued up the audio books he'd downloaded on breathing and meditation, plugged the phone into an external battery, and laid back to listen.

Maybe, someday, he would manage to get his shit together.

--

Hannibal left another voicemail for his husband, who had not had the courtesy to respond. He had texted him again as well, with results as fruitless as he had expected. Will still hadn't received or read the messages, which meant his phone was likely powered off.

He couldn't help the frown that marred his face. Ab, who had come home from college when notified by Mischa of what had happened, looked concerned.

"News?" he asked.

"None," Hannibal said, shaking his head. "I believe his phone is off."

"Ugh, that's rude." Mischa's frown resembled her dad's and brother's. "I hope he's okay."

Hannibal sighed, fidgeting with the hems of his sleeves. He only fidgeted when truly agitated. He had been fidgeting a lot. "So do I."

"I'm going to kick him in the shins when he comes back," Mischa added.

"Me first," Ab insisted, ever the protective big brother.

--

After that first night, Will had been so sore from sleeping on a hard surface that, as soon as he managed to move without groaning, he headed right back to the store. He returned to the camp with additional food as well as the real prize, an inflatable mattress.

Will stayed at the campground for several days and nights. He received some side-eyes from other campers for not having a tent, but he wasn't interested in their opinions. The forest, quiet save for the rustling of trees, birdsong, scuttling creatures, and some chatter from other campers, was exactly what he needed to *think*.

The camp host who kept him supplied with firewood eventually began asking him *questions*, confused by the well-dressed older man who clearly hadn't been prepared for camping, yet stayed night after night. He had become suspicious. Fair enough.

Will assured him that he was just a man who needed to think in a quiet place, but that he would be leaving shortly. He parted the next morning, sunrise at his back.

The next campground he arrived at was similar, but on the shore of a lake. Immediately after securing a spot, he retreated to a local store for mosquito repellent and some calamine lotion for the bites he had already received. He gorged himself on a horrifying meal of fast food: a double cheeseburger, large curly fries, onion rings, and a monstrous soda. Hannibal would have been absolutely appalled at him.

Hannibal.

He was sure his phone was full of messages, but he hadn't taken it off of airplane mode. He slipped his phone from his pants pocket, unlocked the screen, then opened the settings. His thumb hovered over the airplane mode toggle.

Instead, he turned off the screen and pocketed the phone again.

—

Ab had gone back to college. What was happening felt like a family emergency, but in reality it involved no known serious health complications, no known deaths, nothing that would truly excuse him from turning in his papers and taking tests on time. Will was a grown man, after all, free to roam as he pleased. He had left a note, more or less. He was traceable enough to confirm that he was alive and mobile.

Hannibal had taken to watching the banking app on his phone, taking note whenever Will made a purchase and locating the business when possible. He continued to work, taking clients as usual, then performing telephoned interrogations in between appointments.

Yes, they told him. *A man by that description was here. He seemed fine.*

He seemed fine. He was okay. Didn't appear to be in any distress. A little sad maybe, but not injured.

The reports were comforting and frustrating. If Will had been injured or distressed, his continued absence would have had Hannibal canceling his appointments and chasing his husband across the country. He wouldn't have stopped until he had Will with him again to heal him to the best of his ability.

His obsession with Will wasn't rational, except when it was. He couldn't have asked for a more perfect partner in raising children. He knew Will felt lost sometimes, even after years as a family, doubting himself and his worth. But his tenderness with the kids, his love for them and for Hannibal, was always apparent. And it remained true that Hannibal could never repay him for the gift he had brought with him to this world. The privilege of seeing his precious sister grow into the lovely young lady she was becoming could never be overshadowed by something as trivial as Will ridding the world of monsters.

He had no problem with Will eliminating the same types of horrible people he had worked with Graham to eliminate for many years. His only real concern was that Will would be *caught* and taken away from their family.

He could not let that happen.

If worse came to worst, he did have a plan. A last resort.

—

Will fled the mosquito-infested lakeside campground early the morning after arriving. After another truly horrible breakfast of fast food, he located a trailhead off of another old road

where he could stretch his legs. Only one other car was parked in the small strip of gravel, which suited him fine.

He unfolded himself from the car, stretched, and made his way onto the trail and up the hill that immediately elevated the path up towards the cliffs that fell a little way into the hike. It was difficult to tell exactly how far in any given feature was from the map of the area he'd picked up at a gas station. The booklet of campgrounds he'd also purchased only contained information about trails that started or ran through campgrounds, or were within walking distance of a campground.

Will had time to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere for several minutes before the first sign of trouble. A raised voice up ahead had him curious. A lover's spat, perhaps? The single car suggested a limited number of people, and with the likelihood that at the time of their arrival they were the *only* car…well. They probably assumed they were alone on the trail. Free to have it out.

As he rounded a bend, the dense hill no longer muffled the yelling, though they were so enthusiastic in their quarrel that their words sounded like gibberish to him. He didn't bother stepping lightly to disguise his approach. He didn't care if they knew he was there, but they likely wouldn't even notice the crunch of his footsteps as loud as they were being.

Just as he rounded the bend, it happened: the man, average build save for the soft belly, one side of his red face visible, gave one great *shove* to a woman whose appearance Will didn't have much time to observe. She gave a startled shout, then *screamed* as she was launched off of the cliff that fell sharply away from the side of the path.

The screaming was obligingly halted with a sort of *crunch*. *Probably her head or neck,* he thought to himself.

Ordinarily, he probably would have turned his back and made his way down the trail without acknowledging the man or the incident. Unfortunately, the man held the leash of a dog that was cowering away from his now angrily clenched fist. He couldn't leave a dog with a man with obvious anger issues.

Yes, he was perfectly aware that he was a hypocrite.

"Hey buddy, you okay?" he called out.

The man, startled, turned around quickly, eyes wide and mouth set in an "oh" shape. His life as a free man was obviously flashing behind his eyes. In the next several seconds, he would decide whether to run away, talk his way out, or kill the witness.

Will hadn't actually intended on the man's legs becoming tangled in the dog leash as he turned, tripping him up and leaving him teetering on the edge of the path. Will rolled his eyes. It wasn't even really a *tangle*, the leash not even wrapping one entire loop around the man. Will had dealt with much worse.

The man dropped the handle of the lead as he flailed his arms, attempting to regain his balance. It was all Will could do to sprint the several strides between them and grab onto the

section of leash closest to the frightened dog, to ensure the poor thing wouldn't be pulled over the edge with the stupid man.

The other option would have been to grab the man's outstretched arm, saving both lives. "Help!" the man had time to call, reaching towards Will. Still flailing his other arm, gravity won out, pulling him off the cliff to follow his…wife? Girlfriend? Piece on the side? He *might* have actually regained his balance if he hadn't reached out to Will.

The man's shout was cut off by a *splat*.

"Huh," Will said to the dog, one of those labradoodles if he wasn't mistaken. "Was that my fault?" He scratched the pup behind the ears. "It certainly wasn't yours," he crooned, crouching down and ruffling its fur.

The dog's frightened trembling slowly subsided as Will gentled it, cooing and running his fingers through its curly fur. "You could use a good brushing," he whispered to it before picking up the…murder weapon? The leash, anyway. Before leading the dog back down the trail and towards his car, he craned his neck over the side of the cliff and saw both the man and woman splayed below. The woman's skull appeared to be crushed. The man's neck was at an unnatural angle, but he watched for breathing just in case. When there was none, he turned and left with his new friend.

He thought about calling it in, but decided that, on the off-chance someone tracked him down, he could just say that he found the dog sitting alone. They couldn't know whether or not he'd been there for the actual falls, and he absolutely did not want to deal with the police if he didn't need to.

He had too much to hide.

At the car, he helped the dog into the passenger seat and rounded the car to take his own place. He detached the leash, stowed it, and fingered the dog's tag. Just a name on front and phone number on the back. He would have to change her name to make any claim that the dog had no tag believable. She was barely more than a puppy, so she would learn a new name quickly.

"How about Cocoa?" he asked her. She wagged her tail a few times, cautious but hopeful. "Good enough? Okay then. Let's continue our adventure, shall we?" He smiled.

—

Hannibal observed the new transaction in the banking app with curiosity. A pet store. He wondered where his husband had found a dog.

He had been yearning for an addition to their family for years, insisting that a young dog would bring some life and joy back to Cupcake, who was getting fairly old for her breed. They had fostered many dogs when Graham had too many to handle, but never adopted another into their home permanently.

Hannibal supposed that a dog was not the worst thing that could happen.

—

The next campground Will visited had far fewer mosquitoes, thankfully, and was adjacent to a public park where dogs were tolerated. He and Cocoa were already getting along splendidly. She was a quick learner, taking to his gentle training like a natural.

That said, she was a puppy, and no longer petrified by fear, she was extremely playful and excitable. He hadn't convinced her yet that when approached by other dogs, she shouldn't hop around excitedly and bark enthusiastic greetings. That was okay, though. She would learn eventually, and he would never want to truly suppress her youthful exuberance.

He shared some horrid fast food with her occasionally, like the old days when he did so with the dogs he cared for in his twenties and thirties. He was sure that the only reason he wasn't gaining massive amounts of weight was that he spent so much of each day wandering through the trees. He could tell that his health was suffering, nonetheless. He would need to be more careful or face the consequences.

He had been away from home for more than two weeks. Mischa's birthday was in another. He was not, truth be told, very far from home and was confident that he would be back in time for the event.

The beginning of the end of his trip occurred on a trail in the large park next to the campground. It was a busy trail during the day, but he and Cocoa were wandering along fairly early one morning, the first ones onto the trail for the day. Not far from the start of the path, Cocoa became agitated.

"What's wrong, girl?" he asked her.

She whined a little, and if he could guess at the meaning of her body language just then he would call it *nervous excitement.*

He understood as they continue their walk. The coppery scent of blood reached his nose. He continued forward, curious whether the source was human or some other type of animal.

The display was…interesting. Not to his taste, but it had taken effort. The body of a young man, ropes wrapped around wrists and ankles, was tied off to four trees to leave him floating in the middle. He was face down, naked, with wounds where the femoral and brachial arteries were located. He seemed to have bled out, the blood soaking into the forest floor, then puddling where the ground became too saturated.

For the first time in many years, Will closed his eyes and let the pendulum swing.

This man is my ideal. This is my transformation. I drug him to unconsciousness. It seems like it takes ages to tie him high and tight enough to give me room to lay underneath him. I lay beneath him as naked as he is. As he wakes, I puncture his arteries so I can be drenched in his lifeblood as I look into his desperate eyes. The blood is warm on my cooled skin. His life becomes my life. This is my design.

“Ugh,” Will said as he opened his eyes. “Bad luck,” he continued as he gazed at the dead man. Just another poor sap who found himself the temporary obsession of some psychopath. He barely registered the cold sweat that he had broken out in, so used to sweating for a multitude of reasons, including his empathetic mental re-creations.

He contemplated calling *this* one in. He might have to. The likelihood that more people would stumble upon him and the scene quite soon was very high.

Before he could make a decision, he found himself suddenly feeling oddly lightheaded. Woozy. Like he was about to vomit another ear.

Maybe it wasn’t indigestion after all was his last thought before collapsing to the ground.

Chapter End Notes

Shh, it's okay. This story has a happy ending, but not *quite* yet.

And They All Lived

Chapter Summary

The final chapter.

Will realizes he isn't immortal and plans accordingly.

Everybody lives happily ever after.

These two concepts are 100% compatible.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“This is Dr. Lecter-Graham speaking,” Hannibal said as he answered the landline in his office.

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter-Graham, husband of Philip Lecter-Graham?” she checked. His husband’s legal name momentarily startled him before he understood the implications of the question and his stomach plummeted.

“What happened?” he asked, urgency coloring his tone. “Is he well?”

“He is in surgery here at Saint Agnes Hospital. Do you know it?” She gave him the address and the bare details of Will’s condition. It would take him some hours to reach him, but he would manage.

On his way out of the office, he quickly informed his secretary of the family emergency and asked her to clear his calendar for the coming week. From the car, he called Mischa’s school to excuse her from classes. He left a voicemail for Ab at college, promising an update as soon as possible. Last, he called Graham and asked the man if he could come by to pick up Cupcake and keep her until they could return, or have one of his people check in on her a few times a day if he had a full house already. Graham had a key to their home and was always happy to care for the dog he had gifted them all those years ago.

Arriving home, he strode quickly into the front hallway. “Mischa?” he called.

“Dad?” he heard from upstairs. “Why are you back? Is everything okay?”

She hopped down a few steps on the staircase so she could lean over the banister and see him. “What’s wrong?” she asked, concerned, once she saw his face.

“Will is in the hospital, in an emergency surgery. Would you like to accompany me there? The drive is several hours so we will find a hotel once we have seen Will.”

Her face immediately reflected her shock and fear. “Of course I’m coming, just give me five minutes.”

Hannibal nodded and headed upstairs himself to quickly pack.

—

As Will woke, the first thing he noticed was that his perception was all wrong. If he had to bet, he would say that he was on drugs. The strong ones they give you after a serious accident or surgery.

The second thing he noticed was that his chest felt tight and, looking down, he saw that it was bandaged.

The third thing he noticed was Hannibal’s warm hand gently clasping his own. He turned his head in his husband’s direction. The man was frowning even in his sleep. He looked tired and stressed.

Will knew it was all, somehow, his fault.

He stayed quiet, watching the other man sleep. Drinking him in after stupidly running away and depriving himself of his husband’s love and support.

He was a bit drowsy again by the time Hannibal breathed in deeply and opened his eyes, his usual signs of waking. At least he seemed to have been sleeping peacefully, not having a nightmare.

“Hi,” Will rasped, drawing Hannibal’s dark eyes to his. “Guess you came to me before I could come back to you,” he said with a feeble smirk.

“Infuriating man,” Hannibal said on a sigh. But the fondness in his expression and the way he softly stroked Will’s cheek conveyed the deeper message.

Will cleared his throat and swallowed with some difficulty. His mouth was dry. “What happened?” he asked.

“You may or may not remember collapsing.” Hannibal swallowed, eyes welling. “It was fortunate that when you did so, you were within line of sight of a kind woman with a cellular phone and first aid training.”

“Huh,” was all he could think to say, more than a little confused.

“She called for an ambulance, made you comfortable, and monitored your vital signs until the paramedics arrived.”

“...that was nice of her,” Will said, weakly.

“You suffered acute myocardial infarction and underwent bypass surgery. When you arrived, your blood pressure was extremely high, Will and, as you know, your previous diet did you no favors in terms of cholesterol.”

Ah.

That made sense. Organ meat was not at all meant to be consumed as often as he and his first husband had done. He had taken a statin for some years to manage his cholesterol but didn’t love how tired it made him, so he’d left the medication at home when he embarked on his impromptu camping trip. On top of that, he had upended his usual low-sodium diet by consuming massive amounts of salty processed and fast foods in the past weeks.

“That was stupid of me,” Will said quietly. “Should have known I couldn’t eat like I did when I was twenty-five and get away with it for long. Your cooking has probably been keeping me alive in more than one way.” His eyes met his husbands and he noted the pain there. “I’m sorry, darlin’.”

The last was a small bit of emotional manipulation on his part, but for a good cause: to bring Hannibal a tiny bit of happiness. Hannibal loved it when he brought out his old accent. The one he’d trained himself out of in graduate school, once he’d realized being himself outside of the south made other people think he was stupid.

He looked away, thinking. He was in the process of coming to an important realization, one that actually did make him feel stupid.

He looked back to Hannibal and squeezed his hand. Sighed. Swallowed. “Sweetheart,” he said. “We’re going to die.”

Hannibal looked nonplussed. “Yes, Will,” he said. “Eventually, we will die.”

“I don’t like it.” Will felt his lips form a frown and his brows lower in unhappiness. Hannibal, especially, was not allowed to die. Not this one. This one was special. Unique. Unequivocally the best Hannibal Lecter he had ever met. And Hannibal Lecter was, quite possibly, the only person who could ever tolerate who Will had become.

Their connection was too special to lose.

“No one really wants to die,” Hannibal observed. “But it’s the natural course of things.”

He had known. Of course he had *known*, but he hadn’t felt the truth of it until now. Until met with the knowledge that he had nearly died on an innocent walk through the woods.

“I know how to be a better person,” he said, changing the subject.

“Oh?” Hannibal asked.

“Empathize more,” he said with a little laugh. “Like I used to. I never had problems like I have now back when I used my empathy most days, you know?”

“Oh.” Hannibal’s face was a strange mix of realization, understanding, and regret.

“Yeah.” He laughed again. “I realized after I saw the body in the woods.” The drugs weren’t helping keep his emotions in check. He was definitely feeling loopy. “Just need to step into someone else’s shoes, and they become mine…” he trailed off as his eyes fluttered sleepily. “Graham will help, maybe…hey? Is Cocoa okay?”

“Yes, my love. Mischa and I retrieved her from her short stay at the Humane Society. They are at the hotel. Don’t worry about it now. Rest.”

“Hm.” Will let his eyes close and drifted off to sleep, Hannibal’s warm hand still holding his own.

—

Ten years later…

His phone vibrated on his night stand, waking him from a nap. He slept more and more, he and Hannibal both did, as they got older. And, as time dictated, they had become quite old.

He picked up the phone and his glasses, slipping the latter onto his face and checking the screen. He smiled and accepted the call. “Stefan,” he greeted. “News?”

“Hey Phil,” the man greeted. “I can’t make any promises, but this is the best we can do. If it works, it should have the outcome you asked for. If it doesn’t, it’ll probably disrupt the electrical signals in your bodies and kill you both.”

“I’ll transfer the remaining funds,” Will said. “Send it Registered Mail?”

“Absolutely,” Stefan agreed. “I’ll have it in the post tomorrow.”

Will ended the call, then turned towards his husband, who had woken in response to Will’s voice. He wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s shoulders and enjoyed the feel of his husband’s hands sliding into place at his waist.

“I love you, Hannibal,” he said with genuine affection.

“As I love you, my dearest Will.” He paused. “Your secret project?”

Will smiled.

—

In Dimension 30, the bodies of Will and Hannibal Lecter-Graham were discovered by their children, laid peacefully in bed. Clasped between their hands lay a strange item, smooth metal save for a red button.

Ab gently eased it out from between their hands, allowing their palms to touch.

The night previous, the family had gathered for a send-off, a celebration of their lives together. Everything had been carefully planned.

Mischa and Ab couldn't know for certain whether or not the device worked as they had hoped, that it had sent the essences, the *souls* of both men to be born anew in another world. But they chose to believe it had.

—

In Dimension 31, a young Will Graham greeted a young Hannibal Lecter at an airport.

Both smiled and walked quickly towards one another.

Meeting in the middle, they scandalized onlookers with a kiss that could be called indecent at best.

Neither noticed the shocked bystanders. They only had eyes for each other.

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—

Epilogue

Dimension 30, ten years later…

Mischa and Ab Lecter-Graham sat together on a sofa, holding hands, each clutching a small velvet box.

“Ready?” Ab asked his sister.

“As I’ll ever be,” Mischa said.

The pair unclasped their hands in order to open the boxes. The lids were raised almost simultaneously, revealing glittering red diamonds set in platinum: a ring for Ab, and a teardrop pendant on a thin byzantine chain for Mischa.

Ab studied his ring, their family’s looping monogram engraved in the center, the red diamonds set into the metal on either side.

“Dad would have liked it,” Ab said. “Papa would have said it was a little over the top.”

“True,” Mischa said. “But just to tease Dad. He would have secretly loved it.”

Ab chuckled, acknowledging the truth in her words. He slipped the ring out of its slot and slid it over his right ring finger. It really was a little over the top, but he was certain he could pull it off.

He assisted Mischa, clasping the chain at the back of her neck. It rested just below her clavicles, a good length.

“We’ll have them with us forever, now,” Mischa said, patting the pendant.

“So will Baltimore,” he acknowledged. They had finally buried the rest of the ashes, what they hadn’t needed for creation of the diamonds, in the cemetery nearest their family home. They had mixed the men’s ashes together for both the diamonds and the burial. He knew their parents would have approved.

“Ready to go?” Mischa asked, standing and brushing imagined fur off of her practical trousers, from habit more than anything. Cocoa had passed away years ago, and Cupcake several years before that.

“You know it,” Ab said, grinning in anticipation. He picked up his backpack from beside the sofa and handed Mischa hers. They both slipped them onto their backs.

The siblings walked to the painting and swung it forward, revealing the old safe. Mischa entered the code, and the door swung forward smoothly.

There were two things in the safe: an old Mont Blanc pen case, and a small travel jewelry case.

Mischa extracted the travel case, peeking inside for just a moment to reveal the smooth metal device before closing it again and stashing it in her bag.

Ab reached in and took hold of the other, bringing it to hover between himself and his sister. He opened it.

“Which one of us should wear it?” Ab asked. It was frightening to think of being left behind, but it was even more frightening to think of accidentally leaving his sister behind. He would rather die.

“You’ll have to,” Mischa said decisively. “It’s way too clunky for my wrists.”

That was true. It was definitely a man’s watch, and Mischa didn’t even like the weight of small watches designed for slender wrists.

“Okay,” he accepted. “But you have to promise to stay next to me in every new place until we know it’s safe.”

“I know, big brother. We’ve gone over this,” she said with a head shake and a smirk. “Who are we going to visit first?”

“Well, the options are Papa, Dad, or you.” He patted the tin in his pocket containing several small vials of their Papa’s blood. They weren’t sure if it would work properly, since it had been preserved with chemicals, but they hoped it would. To find their Dad, Ab need only prick his own finger to feed the watch. And, of course, to find another Mischa it was the same.

“Let’s find Papa,” Mischa proposed. “I hope we’ll be able to find the girl he told us about and stop Dad from killing her.”

“We might not find one of those universes,” Ab reminded her, shrugging. “Oh well. Guess there’s no point in speculating. It’ll be an adventure either way, and it’ll be nice to see them

alive again, even if they won't know us."

"It will," Mischa agreed. "And maybe they will know us, if we end up where they ended up."

They were ready for the adventure they had been planning since their parents left them. Ab had divorced years ago and was fairly ambivalent about his career, and Mischa had finished her Doctorate, and broken up with her girlfriend, only recently. It would be a shame to lose the degrees they had worked so hard for, but they would rather travel through time and reality than be formally recognized as educated.

With one last look around at the room in which they stood, in the house they had grown up in, Ab strapped on the watch, coated the little card in Will Lecter-Graham's blood, and inserted it, dropping the Mont Blanc case to the floor in the process.

Mischa placed her hand on the watch body.

Ab pressed the red button.

The End

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for your comments and kudos throughout this fic. This was my first WIP, and it was a lovely experience to have you all reacting as I wrote. I'm pretty awful at responding to comments, but I appreciate every single one.

I'll be adding to this collection of universes with the story of Geologist "mama bear" Will and his sad puppy encephalitis Will, and probably some oneshots from some of the universes we left behind, so feel free to subscribe to the series if you want to play along.

<3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!